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# YOUNG CHINA AND NEW JAPAN

BY  
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"MY RUSSIAN VENTURE" ETC.

少年中國  
侯德彰著

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# YOUNG CHINA AND NEW JAPAN

## CHAPTER I

### WE GO DOWN TO THE SEA!

CHINA but a few short years ago was a fairyland of the Western mind, where fabulous dragons kept company with philosophic calm amid a populace devoted to rice-growing, the carving of ivories, and the development of exquisite lacquer. And now, with terrifying velocity, she has shot into the forefront of European consciousness, stirring the troubled waters of discussion, commanding world attention.

And yet to the majority China remains mysterious, unfathomable, kindly or menacing according to the point of view, but still unknown, and therefore to be feared, quelled, brought into line with the concrete facts of capitalistic civilization.

Meanwhile Commissions, economic and political, sitting interminably, have evolved from their deliberations two main schools of thought, one advocating the tempering influence of Japan, who with airplanes and artillery would quickly rectify China's frontiers and restore law and order by the simple process of demolition; the other supporting American tutelage, which by sound finance and generous uplift should father industrial development and stabilize government!

Only a very small minority ever advocate a policy which, leaving China free to find a way for her own salvation, would at the same time ensure the integrity

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of her dominions. Few indeed seem to think that this country, which has preserved intact the essentials of a complex civilization through thousands of years, is capable of solving the difficulties which outsiders yearn to handle.

Moreover, critics and partisans alike appear to forget that China cannot be regarded as a corporate political unit. They do not realize that her intense nationalism does not spring from a central root, but resides in the individual and unbreakable factor of the family, which actually and literally controls and colours the social complexion of the people, their commercial growth, and their general reaction to external influence. For of the salient facts of this teeming household life that spreads over the land and laps up the cities—of the particular pattern which, reduplicated a million-fold, covers the vast fabric which is China—little or nothing is known. The food the people eat, what they drink, the manner of dwelling which shelters them, their ceremonies and conventions, pleasures and diseases, the iron law of the clans, the pervasive influence of the guilds, the significance of each and every detail of a highly stabilized form of human existence falls wide of general knowledge.

It always seems to me that the key to a country's psychology must lie with the common folk. But the fairy-land legend, while it enriched the literature of Europe with appreciations of the art of the Middle Kingdom, her celestial temples, delicate paintings, subtle embroideries, and irreplaceable ceramics, has left untold the story of the simple people, who by their powers of absorption and repudiation have assimilated conquering hordes of alien races again and yet again. Nowhere could I, at any rate, find the plain unvarnished tale of their present-day existence, and, in despair of discovering what I wanted most to know, it became inevitable that I should find out for myself the condition of the immediate theatre of world conflict, the interior forces and

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external menace that threaten her present peace and future stability.

China is all things to all men. For the commercially minded she is the milch-cow who obstinately refuses to be drained dry; to the Empire-builder she appears the keystone of Asiatic supremacy; and, while to the artist and scholar she reveals rare treasures of loveliness and erudition, to the patient and humble-minded she gives generously and fully of herself.

Such at least was my experience.

But before I arrived on her shores I learnt *en voyage* something of the habits and customs of the race, and—what was equally important—I came into direct contact with that peculiarly British type of mind which colours the relations, social and commercial, between the two peoples.

There were some twenty passengers on board the T.S.S. *Menelaus* of the Blue Funnel Line, including me and my young friend Bunny—tried companion of my journeyings. I embarked with the keenest anticipation and curiosity; it was my first experience of a long voyage, and I felt that all sorts of fresh discoveries awaited me. I found, however, that the one connecting link between all our diverse personalities was China—and her contingent trades and interests. Men, women, and children, some were returning to the Far East, or a station on the way, after a home leave, others were making the journey for the first time. A Nonconformist minister, with his kindly young wife, was on his initial trip to Malaya, eager, unspoilt for every fresh impression. An ex-planter also on his way was a typical case of that nostalgia for the East which affects the most confirmed of Jingoese. He had made his pile and gone home to England to spend it, only to find like many another that, a person of consequence in the Orient, with an entire retinue of servants, in his native place he was undistinguished from the herd. Smarting with a sense of inferiority, he had decided to

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come back to his spot in the sun and socially expand. He was a fine specimen physically, accustomed to handle men, and with a good business brain; and I was curious to find out his attitude towards the mixed population of Malaya. I wanted to hear his views on their arts and crafts and racial psychology, but apart from their merits as a working proposition he was not interested. Malays, Tamils, and Chinese, were just 'natives' and everything for which that ubiquitous term of contempt can stand.

This outlook was shared by most of the ship's passengers, who were quite unconcerned with the country from which he or she drew a living, save as a channel of pay. Their indifference, however, sharpened to hostility in regard to the Chinese, against whom they seemed to nourish a special grudge. Again and again I heard the most artistic, frugal, and facultized race in the world dismissed as a dirty and ungrateful lot, who would be all the better for a touch of the big stick or—ennobling thought!—the big gun. The great traditions of Chinese philosophy seemed to have passed over the heads of these quite kindly but marvellously indifferent people. I had supposed in my insular innocence that the Victorian legend of Britain as God's Own Anointed had passed away. I found, however, in full and persistent bloom the reassuring belief that the darker-complexioned races are ordained to serve as footstools for superior white feet, and must damn well see that they don't wriggle and upset the balance. This attitude of mind was not peculiar to my fellow-passengers. I met it many times in varying degree throughout the East. The idea that the Chinese have a fundamental right to grant or to withhold foreign concessions, that they—and they alone—are the only fit and proper judges as to the most desirable method of industrialization for their own country, is not admissible to the average Britisher, who still regards China as the appointed channel for financial exploitation.

In my first surprise at this ingenious theory I flung

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myself against it with tremendous vigour. I might as well have used my head as a battering-ram against the hull of the ship. The Anglo-Easterners would not defend or even debate the point; they simply, and I suppose quite naturally, walked away and left me alone—save for a charming vagabond who had sailed the Chinese seas and knew and loved the Chinese folk. He and I used to for-gather on the hatch and exchange momentary inter-national confidences; but opportunity was limited, we were both constrained in that enforced association with one's fellows that aboard ship destroys all hope of a private life with genial power of choice as to when you shall or shall not join the community. A fierce publicity beats upon your actions, words, even your thoughts, and you become perforce either a member of the searchlight party or the harassed quarry of its investigation. I did not want to belong to either!

Bunny suffered from no such discomfort. She holds an easy and pleasing communication with her fellows and quickly establishes the external intimacy that smooths out all the difficulties of involuntary association. Immediately adaptive, she was swiftly absorbed. I, alas, was most distinctly *not* a social success! Conversation, my strong suit, was definitely discouraged, and most of the passengers, being athletically minded, played deck-tennis and quoits with a fierce *aplomb* that left me with a crushing sense of congenital deficiency. Other amusements found me equally wanting. Gramophone fans competed with ear-splitting records of all nations from noon to midnight—the afternoon siesta being the only ‘close time.’ One genial and rotund fiend whom we called “Dutchie” —he wore an inflamed handkerchief as a perpetual perspiration bandeau—let off jazz strains from his cabin at 6 A.M., the vagabond competing with sentimental ditties, wheezy and old.

But human intercourse is a crying need with me, and foiled in one direction I turned to another. I became



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increasingly aware of a world outside the games-deck and the saloon, where men spent arduous days and anxious nights, where the adventure and the glamour of the sea grew suddenly palpable, where, somewhere down below, giant furnaces were fed by Chinese stokers. I had seen one of their number the night of my arrival, but he had passed swiftly and in shadow.

We had come aboard the *Menelaus* late on the evening before she sailed. It was misty, and the great ship stricken to silence loomed strange and inchoate through the haze. Far-off lights on the dim shore slurred the grey veil that seemed to drift closer and closer, clinging in damp folds to the face and hands, filling the eyes and mouth. To me there is nothing quite so ghostly as a ship the last few hours before she sets out on a long voyage. The cargo loaded, everything in gear, she waits heavy and inert for the generative throb of the engine that will galvanize her into life and turn a sheer, inanimate hulk into a swift, pulsating thing, instinct with motion.

There was not a sign of human habitation; we wandered from deck to deck, through phantom alley-ways that echoed to our feet, up ladders stark as scaffold-poles. And then, in the spectral gleam of a solitary electric lamp, a figure flitted across my vision, his face for a moment centred by the light.

"Bunny," I said, "that is a Chinese."

At my first objective contact with one of his race I felt as though a door had suddenly opened on discovery. I longed to meet him and his fellows, creatures of fire and power, face to face. But it was not until I had been rejected by the promenade-deck that occasion served.

The T.S.S. *Menelaus*, cargo and passenger—the essential first, the decorative and additional after—is one of the biggest of the Blue Funnel fleet. She has a delightful hospitality, with roomy cabins, marvellous food, intuitive stewards—it is hardly necessary to voice your requirements—and the cost of the passage is very much less than



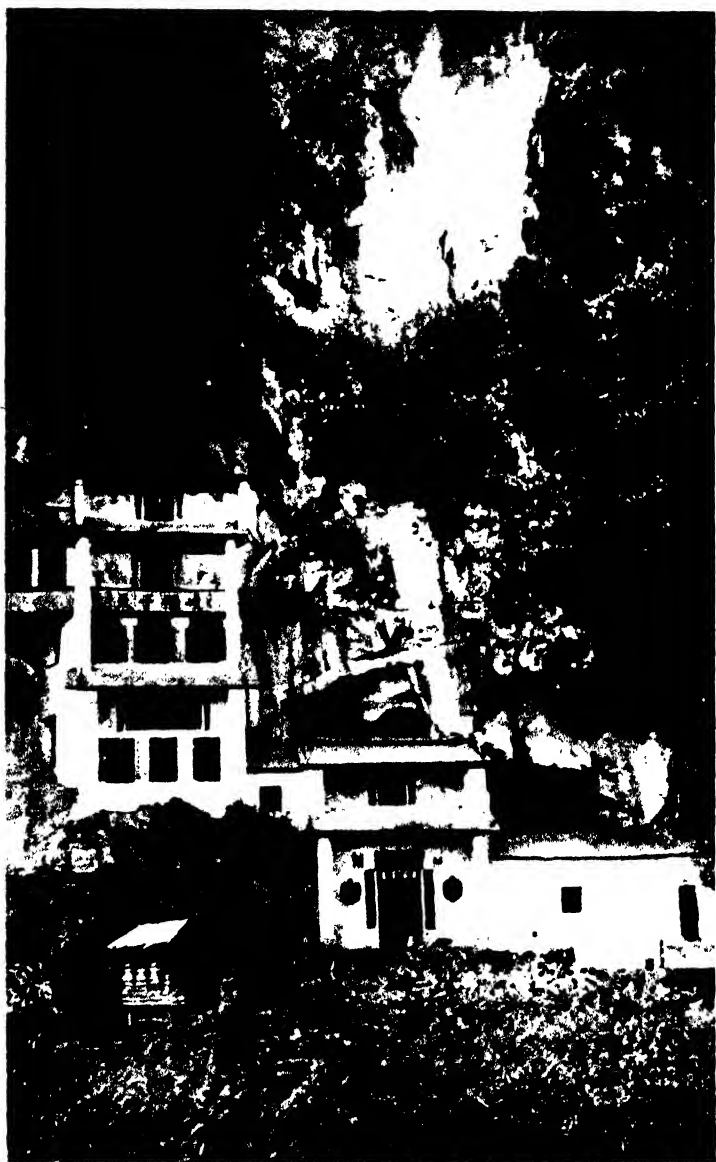
"THIS IS OUR NUMBER ONE."

*Op. 100*



"TO THE LAND OF HIS FOREFATHERS."

*Op. 520*



"HEWN OUT OF THE CLIFF"

(p. 41)

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on the more opulent members of the Line. To me, however, the most alluring difference is that the iron rule which keeps the ship's *personnel* distinct and apart from the general public is here slightly relaxed. Aboard the patrician vessels of the Blue Funnel persuasion—*Sarpedon*, *Hector*, *Patroclus*, *Æneas*, and the rest—there are boundaries and demarcations which you may not lightly cross. The metaphorical salt is set between the passengers and those who handle and control the ship, and with the exception of the executive officer of each section the separation is complete, both at meals and at play. But Menelaus, as a family man, exercises from Olympus a benign influence, and there exists aboard his votary a more brotherly atmosphere. We learnt to know and appreciate the skill, control, and kindness of the men who go down to the sea in Blue Funnel ships, and from the Chief to the Eighth Engineer, the First to the Third Mate, the Purser and “Sparks,” we were friends with them all—even the Captain from his navigation heights unbent.

Thanks to the Chief Engineer, who owing to his position could help me, I was allowed to explore to my heart's content. After the eleven o'clock inspection next morning, he made me acquainted with the rich recesses of fo'castle and galleys, and sent me down precipitous iron steps to the uttermost deeps of the engine-room, close to the heart of that strange and awe-inspiring might that drives the ship. Like most passengers I had complacently taken for granted the miracle of daily and unflagging speed, the smooth and easy movement evolved without apparent effort, but now for the first time I realized something of the watchful and perpetual power lavished on the vitals of sea-going vessels. An occasional glimpse of an engineer in a boiler-suit, stained with the wear and tear of his four hours' strenuous watch below, is all the average passenger knows of those working hours, when shut off from the light of day and the tang of the salt breeze every faculty is bent on keeping the tiniest screw,

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the heaviest bearing, of the great motive power smooth-running and efficient.

I found it an astonishingly clean place, that engine-room, instinct with maritime specklessness. But the greatest revelation was the stokehold. Remembering the roaring torments of Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* with the tortured and exhausted firemen panting for breath, I was prepared for a blast of heat that would singe my hair and sear my soul. But though the atmosphere was torrid it was not unbearable; through the ventilating shafts I felt a moving current of air, and the working space was ample—it seemed to me quite lofty. And here, stripped to the waist, soft-footed, quick-witted Chinese stokers opened furnaces alive with red, leaping tongues of flame, raked out cinders, fed the fires, swinging long-handled shovels with a precise yet leisurely movement that fascinated me. They shifted huge piles of coke, pushed heavily laden barrows with an ease and fluency I have not seen in my experience of manual labour, their slim bodies, boyish hips, firm white teeth suggesting unquenchable vitality and enduring youth. The majority of the big Eastern liners carry Chinese firemen. The work which they get through without strain drags on a Westerner born to different climatic conditions. Each shift, on for four, is off duty eight hours, working two shifts in the twenty-four.

I emerged blinking once more into the open to find the Chief with a slight, taut figure in white boiler-suit beside him. He motioned to the Chinese affably. "This," said he, "is our Number One."

It was the first time I had heard the term which, used right throughout the East, equally describes a Cabinet Minister, the manager of a bank, the presiding genius of a staff of house-boys, or the ganger of a squad of coolies. In this case Number One was the head and chief of the firemen, whom he both engaged and discharged. Through him all orders for the stokehold were issued, all complaints

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made. He no longer fed the furnaces—Number One was too important for that—but he kept a watchful eye on those who did, settling disputes, dispensing advice, and acting generally as the fatherly head of the whole stoking contingent.

They made a significant picture. The Chief shrewd, substantial, twinkling with Yorkshire wit, full of a quiet competence that controlled the complicated mysteries and responsibilities of the engine-room. Number One neat, compact, and efficient, with brown face creased in a smile that emphasized two gold teeth, and his mild and beaming eyes that peered through horn-rimmed glasses. He usually wore the cotton cloth common to the whole of China, but on occasions, notably when I wished to take his photograph, he would put on a suit of spotless white linen and a pair of patent shoes and become amazingly Western in appearance. I liked him best in his working clothes, a symbolic figure of the might of Chinese labour, mellowed by life to a rich humour, a fatalistic yet cheerful acquiescence.

Number One has a girl-wife and an infant son. He has tasted previous matrimonial experience, but, to quote his own inimitable phraseology, "She damn fool, all the same die." Her successor, an extremely dainty little person, always comes to meet him when the ship gets in at Shanghai. He hands over his pay, she keeps the accounts, and for two or three days they are united. Then once more the *Menelaus* sets sail and they do not meet again for months.

It is one of the penalties or reliefs of sea life that married couples are so infrequently together that they may lack time to quarrel or even achieve really important matters! This at least was the heartbreaking discovery of one of the ship's engineers.

"Have you any children?" a charming and serious-minded woman asked him. It was a gorgeous evening and we were all on deck.

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"Not yet!" He shook his head dolefully. "We have been married for four years; but you see I only get home for three weeks twice a year!"

He was a fresh, clean-limbed, clean-living young man, with deep, wistful eyes and an oddly attractive smile; his sole relief from the burden of separation from his wife was to play mournfully on the ukelele in the recesses of his lonely cabin.

It is a pleasing tradition that a sailorman's life is jolly and gregarious, but I have learnt to distrust popular songs as an index to facts, and as I see it officers and crew alike lead something of a monastic existence. Watch succeeds watch, responsibility follows responsibility, there is little else but food and sleep, with memories in between.

The Chinese, however, "no belong that pidgin." Their shift over, they gather together like one large family, hilarious and cheery. Segregation from the female sex does not seem to impair their *joie-de-vivre*, which comes to full flower at meal-time. 'Chow' plays a most important part in Chinese life and I shall have much to say of its varying degrees of succulent excellence. But always memory comes back to the first occasion when I was present at the daily feast.

It was an afternoon of high summer. Through the Bay of Biscay we had reached smooth water in the Mediterranean. The sun blazed on a sapphire and turquoise sea, on white boards dazzlingly scrubbed, through open portholes on the sleeping occupants of cabin bunks and on the lower deck, where under the scanty shade of a stretch of matting a crowd of firemen were having their meal. From big bowls of rice, chicken, pork, fish, and vegetables they filled their smaller ones, dipping each savoury morsel in soya-bean sauce. The food smelt good and seemed to taste better, and then and there I decided that I should like the national diet. The men who handled coke and sweated grime ate daintily, manipulating their chopsticks

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with a skill that picked up the smallest grain of rice, the least shred of chicken.

Chow is at once a communal and an individual spread. Everybody takes food from the same dish with his own chopsticks, but each follows his own sweet will in its consumption; some remain at the table, others walk about bowl in hand, or sit in the traditional honey-pot fashion of our childhood. The Chinese will sit like this for hours if they have the good luck to be at leisure, not motionless nor in rapt inscrutability, but talking, laughing, making shoes, repairing matting, doing one of the hundred jobs of their daily existence.

Later, the shift off duty, washed and brushed, take their ease in the living quarters, and there one evening I visited them. It was a queer, attractive atmosphere, amazingly unlike the matter-of-fact uniformity of the rest of that British ship. The long, low room was lined with bunks that stretched up to the ceiling, and from each hung curtains and clothes, and strips of cloth in every shade of colour—reds and browns and blues and greens, all blended with unfailing natural taste. Small groups were talking, some were washing shirts and other garments, in the centre at a trestle-table four men were playing *mah-jong* with an intentness that shut off the high-pitched voices of their neighbours. It was a vivid, human scene; the smooth young faces—the Chinese retain the look of youth well into maturity—the long, slender fingers, the exquisitely shaped hands that all the shovelling of the stokehold cannot deface.

I was conscious suddenly of a new influence in the atmosphere. To my right there was a small recess, and peering closer I seemed to see the outlines of a shrine. I glanced inquiringly at Number One, who was doing the honours with a perfect finish.

“Have a look-see, missy,” he said smilingly, and switching on a light guided me ceremoniously to a large deal box that, standing on its side, was open to the room.



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Lined with red paper it was trimmed with neatly shaped festoons framing a coloured picture of a tall man with a full beard. Seated on a throne he wore the flowing robes and tall headdress of the Manchu period ; his eyes gleamed, and he stretched out a mandatory hand. A satellite stood to left and right, obviously inferior in majesty and power ; they did not compete with the Joss, but respectfully served him. By no means a work of art and curiously devoid of Chinese elegance and grace, the sheer ferocity of the face, the imprecation of the hand, held my imagination, and stirred somewhere an echo of fear.

"He good Joss," said Number One. "Make send top-side Heaven."

Stooping he lit a stick of incense in a small bronze burner, and a faint sweet smell filled the room. I was among unknown gods and ancestral customs. Offerings of food and drink were within easy distance, and the minions of the Joss attended to his wants. I gathered that these oblations were frequently renewed.

Not all the Chinese present, I think, shared Number One's complete and obvious faith—modernism has already found its way to old Cathay—but after the custom of their country every one preserved the respectful and sympathetic attitude always shown to any religious form or ceremony, their own or other people's.

"They're a good lot," remarked the Chief as we left. "Treat a Chinese on the level and he'll never let you down."

We stood and looked out over the smooth-flowing waters, and as he smoked his pipe I felt somehow his thoughts were far away.

"They put up some fine shows during the War," he said presently. "I remember one ship that I was on had some very narrow squeaks. We were chased on one occasion by a submarine for hours. It seemed eternity before we got away, but the Chinese never turned a hair. They stuck to the stokehold all the time, working like devils."

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I could see them down in the bowels of the ship, cut off from all sound or knowledge of the enemy, desperately fighting to keep going at full speed, their only communication with the outside world the short, sharp orders from the bridge.

"They didn't so much as look at the escape ladder," he went on, "I was with them—that was all they wanted, some one they trusted, that was enough. You see, while I was there they knew if the ship was struck they wouldn't be forgotten."

Forgotten! Through my mind echoed the awful story of an engineer, who, getting no further instructions from the bridge, rushed up on deck, only to find the whole ship deserted and already sinking. Officers and men had been forced to take to the boats, and in the desperate urgency of the moment engineers and firemen were left behind, not knowing what was happening up above, but stoking, stoking to the last. . . .

It was fantastic to pass from this world which judged men as men without count of their complexion to the social atmosphere of the saloon, where by this time I was suspect of revolutionary designs against British prestige—if not British property—in the land of Confucius. But, as a pretty little woman said, I knew nothing about China, after all, and when I got there I should find it very different! She was so decorative in a very lovely Manchu garment that I could not argue with her; indeed, for a time hunger for discussion left me—it was enough merely to feel one was alive. The sun was lazily pleasant, the sea amazingly quiet and deck-chairs invitingly somnolent. I was drifting into a habit of delicious ease, luxuriating in the unaccustomed length of leisure, the mental freedom of unharnessed thought, when violently, and most unpleasantly, I was awakened.

Before we left England kind friends had painted for us the terrors of Eastern latitudes. There was the monsoon that at any moment might spring upon you like a tiger,

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the savage heat that melts your suffering flesh and shrinking bones, the dread diseases which would return you to your own country bald and scarred and indescribably defaced! It was not any of these calamities or their anticipation that overtook me, but a sudden flaming fever, the result of a particularly virulent form of vaccination.

I had undergone severe excoriation against my convictions in deference to the mass opinion of my friends, only to discover when I arrived in China by the middle of June that smallpox is not a summer but a winter complaint, and that I had suffered unnecessarily. This, however, did not affect my immediate temperature, which soaring rapidly bore me into that half-world of consciousness where mental images suddenly unloosed take on reality.

All that night, round and round my cabin, over the bunk, up the walls, across the ceiling, the Joss of the Chinese shrine pursued me, his outstretched hand within an ace of touching mine. I was engulfed by a dreadful fear, a clammy desperation, and from the depths of my soul I sought for means of placating him. In the inconsequence of aberration I decided to make him a votive offering of my favourite bracelet—if he would go away and leave me to get well.

The next morning was calm and bright; I awoke refreshed, a little weak, almost normal, but still sufficiently suffused with the night's horror to confide to Bunny my promise to the Joss.

There may have been a tinge of regret in my voice, but not, I think, enough to account for her logical and determined attitude.

"You can't do it," she said. "In the first place, who's going to take it to the old Joss? You can't walk in and leave it there without an explanation."

"I'll drop it before the shrine unbeknown," I said weakly.

"And possibly have an innocent Chinese arrested for theft from a passenger," she countered scornfully.

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"Then I'll give it to Number One," said I.

"You can't without asking permission of the Chief, and he'll obviously think you're mad. Remember this is only the beginning of the voyage," she said bitterly; "we've quite another three weeks to run."

There are moments when my sweet young friend's reasoning power is almost more than I can bear; at any rate on this occasion it left me defenceless and subdued. Alas, the bracelet never reached the Joss, but I felt at the time that he appreciated and understood my offer! At any rate he has not again visited me.

We had arrived at Port Said when at last, and with difficulty, I staggered up on deck to watch the ragtag and bobtail of that ill-assorted city crowding the quay. Dusky-faced dealers with bead necklaces, obviously the best "Woolworth," offered pseudo-amber and dubious ivory. A dark gentleman in a grubby loin-cloth protested he would dive sheer under the ship for sixpence, appealing to all and sundry as "Mr Mackenzie" or alternately "Mary Pickford," "Mrs Meyrick," and as a last hope "Queen Mary." Fortune-tellers reminiscent of home-grown charity bazaars prognosticated glowing futures at a shilling a time; vendors of cigarettes, chocolates, and damaged bananas flooded the decks. A conglomeration of soiled modernity and ancient grime, Port Said to me is a distressing result of a cheap *liaison* between the Orient and the Occident.

It was late afternoon as we steamed into the Suez Canal. The sun like a full-blooded orange flopped into the sea, leaving a sky luminous with queer greens, merging into yellows. Tall date-palms, disdainful camels, muffled Arabs, gave place to modern villas and motor-cars that flashed by on a well-built road. But under the haunting glamour of the young night, parting by fine degrees with the last embers of the day, the immediate present was commanded by the eternity of things that is the East.

Spectral, sinister, the huge mounds of salt raised from

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the sand by evaporation and intensive labour merged into the amethyst glow of the sheer sandstone crags that rise abruptly from the foreshore. An endless panorama of human effort against natural conditions, the country has the attraction of a losing cause. Egypt, in defence, I feel, of her immortal Cleopatra, tries to evade the sinuous permeation of an alien clime. But surely and relentlessly the process of assimilation continues, and all too soon camels may carry the insignia of "Buy British" to the ultimate ends of the desert.

The Red Sea by prophecy should have reached boiling-point on our arrival, but it has always been my misfortune, or good luck, to shoot wide of other people's ratiocinations, and I found this peculiarly uninteresting stretch of water pleasantly cool. Indeed, I thought regretfully that unmitigated warmth would always evade me until with tropical fervour the great heat fell upon us, and the whole tenor of our days was altered. Electric fans brisked the air, cooling drinks emerged like magic, salad and fruit, a bathing-pool, ice-cream and awnings, ministered to our gasping bodies on all sides.

The stupendous thing to me was that for the first time in all my life I saw what really is the sun. East of Suez it has no acquaintance with the pallid luminary called by the same name. It has the colour, magnificence, and attraction of red-gold; you turn to it instinctively as a font of life. But for all my worship I existed in a kind of Turkish bath, shedding clothing until the minimum of Western decency was reached. Cottons and voiles were the only wear, bare legs and arms inviting what faint breath of wind there might be. But if the days were languid, the nights had a luxuriant softness that Europe does not know. It was impossible to sleep, and we sat late on deck talking, listening for the hundredth time to a worn-out dreamy record on the gramophone.

Romance was in the air, an impossible moon drenched the decks with silver and lent glamour to a magic sea.

## WE GO DOWN TO THE SEA!

Couples suddenly inexplicably attracted held transitory hands, leaning soulfully over the side to watch the trail of fairy foam in the ship's wake.

My friend the vagabond would drift by with the immediate object of his heart's desire, expertly lingering for an enchanted moment in the shadow of a ventilator. The ex-planter forgot his gloom and occasionally danced and even flirted ; so strong was the community feeling induced by the sudden impact of the insidious atmosphere that we told each other the story of our lives with skilful deletions and embroideries. The women grew sentimentally wistful, the men protective and gallant. It has been said that no breach-of-promise suit relating to the Red Sea could succeed in any court of law ! A kind of matrimonial bacillus infects whole shiploads, of all ages and temperaments.

And meanwhile the *Menelaus* held a level course, the deck officer in cool white upon the bridge, the engineer dripping perspiration below. From our lotus-life of dreamy pleasure we were aroused by the thought that within two days we should touch Penang. I waited eager and impatient for the first glimpse of the land where I should meet an advance-guard of the China I had travelled thousands of miles to find.

## CHAPTER II

### “ALL COLOUR AND ALL ODOUR AND ALL BLOOM”

**M**ALAYA with its fresh vegetation, limpid streams, and turbulent sunsets has the quality of eternal youth. The delicacy of spring seems to blend into the ripeness of summer, to burgeon anew; time's mutations are traced in a succession of flower and fruit, sunshine is tempered only by swift showers of rain. Nature splashes her canvas with a strong brush: the 'flame of the forest' spreads its radiant banners of piercing red, shaded and toned by the background of green in every tint and texture; the passion-flower hangs in a cloud of tense purple, and orchids, perfect and preposterous, wind themselves about old jungle giants and slender saplings. And inevitably, in recurrent rhythm, there are the rubber-trees, source of Malaya's prosperity and depression.

My first impression of Penang, that exquisite place of ideal bathing-pools, white-walled villas, waving palms, and scuttling monkeys, was of a feminine and glowing beauty that intensifies every form of sensuous appeal. The softness of the air was palpable. The sun had a personal heat. I saw the actuality behind the faintly tinted shade which is Europe's blue in the splendid sapphire of the waves that lapped the silver sand and felt the virile scarlet of the great clustering blooms splashed prodigally over the landscape.

We were in high spirits that wonderful morning, social as well as atmospheric, for while most of the passengers would be ashore for only a few hours, we were staying the

best part of a week. Bunny had a married friend in Malaya and she and her husband had come to meet us, motoring a hundred and fifty miles in sheer light-hearted joy at our arrival. Distance in this pleasant land counts as little as time in the service of hospitality, and they were taking us back to their home, right in the heart of the jungle, that same afternoon—to rejoin the ship at Singapore.

To land it was necessary to take a *sampan*, the flat-bottomed rickety boat indigenous to the East. Bunny, who loathes small craft, looked appealingly towards a Blue Funnel launch speeding across the harbour. But there was nothing doing in that direction, and she had to step into the swaying vessel, captained by a dark-skinned individual in a truncated fez and a white suit. It was an enchanted scene, glowing with slow-moving colour, leisurely but intense. Fruit-sellers, chocolate-hawkers, postcard nuisances, crowded the quay, but invested with a pleasing reticence they neither pushed nor thrust. Their nationalities and costumes were delightfully strange to me. I had heard the names, but reality was wide of description, and at first it was difficult to distinguish Tamil and Malay. The Chinese, in short trousers and white coats, were already almost as familiar as the English overlords whom Bunny, with British yearning, sensed at sight; but at the moment I was fascinated by the slim-built figures in the native *sarong* of silk or fine linen, cut like a narrow skirt with a wide pleat at the front. They bore themselves proudly, their bronze bodies naked to the waist or draped in a loose blouse or *bajou*. Slender girls of the same complexion with jasmine in their hair wore a long scarf, or *sari*, swathed closely to the figure. Then there were people of a slaty-black in loin-cloths or huddled in shabby *sarongs*, spindle-shanked, narrow-headed, unalluring.

From the quay we drove through the markets, a medley of motor-cars, bullock-carts and rickshas, tiny shops, open stalls, and jolly little naked children, brown, black and



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yellow, and on to the park, where unimaginable luxuriance of tropical tree and shrub surrounded us. Magnolias breathed cascades of perfume, tall palms pointed to a sky poignant in its serenity. Small grey monkeys swung from branch to branch, trundling their young with fussy care ; but at that hour few humans were visible.

" This heat," observed Bunny, desperately fanning, " is almost more than I can bear."

I heard her with regret. It is to me a perilous thing thus to complain against the sun, lest, taking umbrage, he should disappear. But while I gloatingly absorb his rays my young friend turns shrinkingly away—even in a *terai* double-brimmed, double-crowned, and revoltingly heavy.

Outside the park in the residential quarter we found a minimum of shade. Opulent mansions, fantastically painted, solemnly faced us. China and the Riviera were the chief architectural influences, with sober British taste sandwiched in between. Pagodas rose gracefully from Oriental gardens, verandahs with striped awnings looked on huge Chinese lions in stone, and through open shutters I glimpsed simple wicker chairs, marvellous cabinets, and glowing tables of deep lustrous red.

" Chinese millionaires own most of these places," our host told us. " Many of them have made huge fortunes with quite a tiny capital. They make very good citizens and are very proud of their British nationality—every child born in Malaya is a British subject—but it does not prevent intense patriotism for the land of their forefathers, rich and poor alike. The Chinese in Malaya and the Straits Settlements alone sent over £50,000 to help the victims of the great flood in 1931."

Gradually the conflicting factors of Malayan life began to sort themselves out. I learnt that the Chinese are the chief industrial and mine workers and that Tamils are imported from India for the rubber-plantations.

" And what," I asked, " about the Malays? "

The answer amazed and thrilled me. It seems that there

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is still one race of men whom money cannot tempt. The interior philosophy of the Malay would break the heart of the most determined mass-producer in the world. Industrialism does not attract nor high wages move him. What should he buy? He desires a plot of ground, a hut, rice, fish, occasional curry, wife and children, his national festivals of song and dance, swimming and sunshine. These things he can and does possess. An aristocrat in the true sense of the term in that he preserves his fastidiousness untainted by external influences, he has never yet been harnessed to commerce, but moves immune from the capitalist struggle for existence.

“He makes a very good house-boy when he chooses,” my friend added, “and an excellent chauffeur.”

And because of his splendid isolation hundreds of Tamils are imported and thousands of Chinese employed. I remembered, however, that my lord the Malay enjoys an amazingly fertile soil and a climate without stress or rigour. It is perhaps because of this that his nerves occasionally ‘go phut,’ when, his will collapsed, he runs amok. If, however, industrialism be the cure, I offer congratulations on the disease.

By this time we had reached the Runnymede Hotel, where Penang gathers for cocktails, or *pahits*—and lunch. This pleasant social centre is one of the meeting-places of the East where every traveller in the Orient eventually arrives. A huge lounge, cool yet crowded, the chatter of voices, the tinkle of ice, electric fans, and solemn bookstalls stocked with British periodicals and newspapers a month out of date flash into my mind. All round us were welcoming smiles and friendly hands. Malaya’s hospitality, like her climate, is lavish and unchanging to every one who lands upon her shores. It was at the Runnymede, they told me, that in the old days when rubber spelt fortune and spouted 50 per cent. dividends the planters flushed with prosperity and optimism used to meet. Money was nothing—dollar-bills were ten a penny, champagne foamed

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in a perpetual cascade, Epicurean luncheons, Lucullus banquets, balls, and drinking-bouts followed in hectic succession. The Golden Age had returned. The cheapest product in the world was selling at the dearest price. They ate and drank and thought and toasted rubber, confident that the milky liquid gushing from a million trees would bear them for ever on a tide of unremitting wealth.

And then the bottom fell out of the market. Supply outstripped demand, salaries were cut, staffs reduced, the slump set in. Gone for all time are those prodigious days of easy affluence, but the glamour of their memory remains and men still gather in good fellowship though vintage wines have given place to whisky *ayer*—little spirit, much water—and ‘beans’ are no more.

I admire Malaya’s pluck intensely, white and coloured, and the quiet determined fashion in which she has got down to bedrock needs and facts. I heard the story from our host.

We left Penang soon after lunch, and crossing the wide river by the steam-ferry, a vast contraption which carries lorries and cars, produce and passengers, took the road for the interior in the direction of Ipoh. That drive is one of the most imperishable of my memories. The air was saturated with heat and my blood absorbed it like a stimulant. We raced at breakneck speed along a perfectly built road typical of the main thoroughfares right through the Federated Malay States—glorious wide straight roads radiating to all points of the compass. We passed townships with tiny aggregations of British, Chinese, Tamil, and Malay, each with its national characteristics; luxuriant stretches of vegetation wild with orchids, plantations with never-ending groves of trees symmetrically set.

I had envisioned rubber as an enlarged growth of the species cherished for decorative purposes in suburban houses where their large, flat, and oil-suggesting leaves vie with the *aspidistra*. I found the real thing tall, graceful,

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with a smooth trunk breaking at the top into a crown of leaves something like elm and of a pleasant damask shade of green.

Our host, familiarly known as Bob, and the manager of the group of tin-mines, had been in Malaya for some time. Beryl, his wife, had come straight from home to take up housekeeping in the wilds. They had been married eight years and had two children, both at school in England. A Scot by birth, small, dark, alert with keen eyes and a sensitive smile, I never knew a man whose national characteristics were more clearly marked. But unlike most Britishers he regarded life in the East not as a passing phase, but as permanently rooted. He had come to Malaya 'for keeps.' It was the abiding place of his hopes and ambitions, and his plans, unlike the vast majority of Westerners, extended far beyond the fluctuations of rubber and the variations of tin. Many of the mines, he told me, had shut down since the slump; some of the workers were at starvation limit, others had thought out most ingenious ways of keeping alive. At one place the Chinese put up a marvellous proposition. They suggested that they should work the mine one day a week, the small amount of tin produced would find a sale, and from the proceeds the company could feed them. The cost per head came out at a few cents a day and they asked for no additional wage. They argued that if they were retained at this cut-to-the-bone rate the company would save the expense of reopening the mine when the tide turned and reassembling the workers. They won their point, and on a diet of rice and vegetables carry on the mine and their families too. Then quite a number have started market-gardening, raising vegetables on odd bits of ground and hawking them up country.

"They manage to get along," said Bob. "I've known a Chinese fell a tree, carry the trunk for miles to the nearest town, chop it up for firewood, and then trundle it round. He'll often make less than twenty cents for the day's

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labour, but it is twenty cents to the good, and he'll live on it, and his wife and kiddies as well."

He paused—we whizzed round a corner, and immediately before us lay a white-roofed bungalow, green-shuttered with a deep verandah, and a garden full of exotic plants and homely flowers; pineapples, to my astonishment, growing close to the ground, jasmine, freesia, English pansies, and strong-stemmed marigolds.

"This," said Bob, "is the headquarters of a big rubber estate. The manager is a friend of mine and we are going there for tea."

We passed through a delicious cool dimness upstairs into a large room agreeably furnished West-cum-East and protected by netting from mosquitoes. We had not suffered unduly so far from these dreadful creatures, but that day for the first time we had become acquainted with their ferocity. I was not too badly bitten, but poor Bunny with that unhappy attraction she possesses for the lesser fauna was almost devoured. And here I must register a protest against chemical research in that nothing has been discovered that really discourages the appetite of these voracious brutes. Oil of lavender, pyrethrum, and the rest merely incite desire, and paraffin seems just a tonic. You drench yourself with all these evil-smelling things only to find you have added a piquant sauce to your sacrifice. I am told that menthol dissolved in spirits of turpentine proves efficacious, but I am not too sanguine, and the opinion of those who live permanently in the East is that the only course is to grin and bear it.

It was an intriguing situation. Outside, the mosquitoes buzzed in an impossibly tropical landscape; inside, our hostess dispensed delicious China tea in Bond Street pyjamas, pressing us with the marvellous fruit of the country, mangostins—white as snow inside a horny shell, quartered like an orange—and tiny cream-like bananas known as 'lady's fingers.'

The estate was too vast for us to see more than a small

portion. But rubber is inevitably the same. Everywhere the trees confronted us, an incision in the bark showing where it had last been tapped. I was shown the process, easy and primitive. A small orifice is pierced and, hey presto, the fluid runs like beer from a barrel! There had always seemed to me something mysterious in the production of commercialized rubber; I felt there must be complicated machinery, scientific methods. But not a bit of it. The whole process as I saw it was carried out in a simple building of corrugated iron, where the fluid rubber poured into deep sinks is precipitated by a chemical compound and removed in sheet form to a press to take its final shape. For a few weeks the sheets hang up to dry and then, packed in wooden cases, are ready for shipment.

The vast fortunes which have been made from this vegetable product, and the amazing cheapness of its preparation, would have seemed quite comic but for the underlying tragedy of its collapse. For the individual planter and manager swept by a turn of the wheel from plenty to comparative penury I have every sympathy. But the huge rubber trusts that in the heyday of preposterous dividends made no provision against the inevitable reaction merely invite contempt. It is a distressing experience to find professional business-men lacking the most obvious principles of business.

Inside the factory Tamils, men, women, and little children, slopped about the wet floors, working at sinks and presses. Some of the kiddies were quite tiny, but they all looked very well and were obviously happy. In this department no skill or training is necessary; a tapper, however, must know how and when to deal with a tree.

Bunny, meanwhile, had fallen for a small black baby prodigiously fat and quite naked, his mother, coal-black and smiling, looking on with obvious pride. The home life of these people is perpetuated on the same basis as in their native villages of Hindustan. They are housed in wooden huts known as ‘the coolie lines,’ which teem with humanity.

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kitten and brought him up by hand, and then one day he barged off. We caught glimpses of him once or twice, but never so near as this. . . . There he is again."

A strident call, too assertive and masculine to be classed as a mew, but all the same suggestive of that domestic sound, stirred the jungle. Without a word Beryl jumped from the car and ran towards the jaws of the green trap immediately on our right.

"You'll get lost," I cried, terrified.

"She's all right," said Bob, and, leaving us with the chauffeur or *syce*, joined in the search. But, alas, Timmy though he loved his mistress could not forsake his native home!

"Besides," said Bunny, "he may have a wife and several broods of children by now. You couldn't expect him to leave them behind."

Regretfully the chase was given up and we resumed our journey, in a very little while to reach the bungalow at Chenderiang. Soft garden scents greeted us—a garden reclaimed from the jungle which crept right up to the gates.

"Oh, yes," said Beryl—she's an amazing young woman—"there are plenty of wild animals, tigers and leopards, you know, and elephants as well. I sat with Bob all one night on a tiger shoot."

She might have said she had gone to fetch the milk, she was so utterly unperturbed. I began to realize that life in Malaya is singularly eventful. This sitting business, for instance, takes place on a kind of platform slung from a high tree and quite unprotected. Down below the bait is tethered, a live goat or a kid whose bleats attract the killer within shooting-range. Not, I thought, an occupation that would commend itself to most young wives, and I had a vision of a leaping beast, clawing, snarling, perilously near. But Beryl has an adaptive soul; curious of life and unafraid she runs her household, shoots tigers, breeds dogs, plays tennis, swims, and dispenses hospitality with immovable serenity.

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We went to bed in a mosquito-proof room—the wretches buzzed against but could not perforate the metal netting at the windows. It had been a day of panoramic impressions, shattering contrasts, and now in the pretty room with the chintz hangings, light mats, and luxurious appointments we experienced the greatest of them all. Along the ceiling, up the walls, ran the tiny lizards known as *chichas*. Pretty, harmless little creatures, they have a diabolical chuckle which on that first night curdled our blood. They eat insects and act as aerial scavengers, but when frightened have an unpleasant habit of shedding their tails!

Out in the darkness beyond were other even more disturbing noises.

Bunny sat up suddenly among the pillows.

“Listen—I can hear the jungle breathing,” she said; and involuntarily I shivered. It seemed somehow to be closing in on us. In that muttering sea of dank leaves and matted vegetation all the pent-up malevolence of Nature in her cruellest mood seemed to beat against the bungalow—frail yet indomitable standard of man’s supremacy.

“To-morrow,” said Bunny, “Bob thinks we may meet some Sakais. They live up trees in the jungle and use poisoned darts.”

After which pleasing information she turned round and went to sleep.

We saw the Sakais all right next morning, soon after breakfast on the lawn. We were content with tea and fruit, but Bob, uncompromisingly British, consumed authentic bacon and eggs. The original inhabitants of Malaya, the jungle-dwellers, rarely come into contact with white men. But Bob has established friendly relations with the tribe and, on occasions when they come down to the nearest store to trade the pelts of wild beasts for rice, they call in and exchange the time of day.

Some twenty of them, men, women, and children, in



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loin-cloths and tattered bits of cotton, they stood quiet and impassive in the garden. Short, rather squat, only one of their number had the fine proportions of the Malay. I did not find them prepossessing in appearance. Their mouths, stained a vivid blood-red inside and out, were rather awesome.

"It's only betel-nut," Bob explained. "It makes them look queer, but they are quite harmless." The men carried enormous blowpipes over six feet long, and presently the champion stood out and gave an exhibition of his skill.

He raised the instrument, fitted a tiny dart, and with one gigantic breath blew it straight to the mark. I never saw so fine a piece of marksmanship. Again and again he got a bull's-eye. I realized a little creepily that, in the jungle, the British overlord would stand small chance against the Sakais. Moreover, as I knew, the darts were winged with death. Soaked with a virulent poison they cause the victim to succumb from the slightest scratch.

"They're not supposed to poison their darts now," said Bob. "It's against the law."

I received the information gratefully, but in my heart I was not convinced. There is something in the Malay, aboriginal and contemporary, that is impervious to white law. Strange stories are told of men fallen under the spell of some old crone who by her hypnotic will has reduced them to complete subservience. Legends are rife as to the curious manifestations of magic. The Superintendent of Police over a large district told me of an old man arrested on a charge of stabbing, whose *kris*, or native knife, found bloodstained, was the chief evidence against him. It was many miles to the police headquarters and the prisoner had to be taken up-river. Suddenly one of the constables thought he saw a snake in the bottom of the boat; the creature raised its head and seemed about to strike. In a flash the old man had seized and thrown it overboard, to the manifest relief of his captors. But

when the boat arrived at the journey's end the *kris* had vanished. . . .

The Sakai element was another strand in the tangle of Malayan nationalities. Even our friends' domestic staff was something of a conundrum. The Chinese house-boy Number One wore an immaculate white suit. But the gardener was an amazing contrast. I shall never forget my first glimpse of this functionary. It was in the early morning, and looking out of the window I beheld a figure, motionless and naked save for a loin-cloth, squatting against a bamboo-tree picking fleas from a dog's back. He was like an enlarged Gandhi, minus blanket, with a fierce beard and a terrifying head of hair. The long black strands floated behind him; like Samson of old he had never known the shears.

He was, Beryl explained, a Tamil, but as he was quite unlike the closely coiffured rubber-workers I had not recognized him. There were others of his kidney about the place, and several odd Malays.

“We have to keep a large staff,” she continued. “There's the matter of caste and religion to consider. The shopping question is really very trying. You see, you mustn't send a Malay to fetch whisky or beer or anything like that, and a Tamil mustn't touch beef—their religion forbids them. A Chinese can buy anything, but then I can't spare Number One to go down to the store, so that I send Tamil and Malay turn and turn about.”

The alternation of East and West recurs throughout the social pattern down to the smallest detail. Meals served European fashion include Oriental dishes; daily baths are arranged for, but a Tamil brings your water and you splash about in a square tank or an earthenware tub; oil lamps are burnt or, where people have a tame dynamo, electric light.

Sunday is high holiday in Chenderiang. The whole district collects at a lovely bathing-pool enclosed by gracious trees and giant firs. We swam and gossiped,

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drank gin-slings and grew sunburnt to the bone, and then went back to a marvellous curry—the traditional Sunday tiffin—shared by innumerable friends of all ages and temperaments.

I had never known the true succulence of curry till I came to Malaya. It has not the faintest kinship with the weak, pale concoction we serve with waterlogged rice at home. It has a thousand flavours and additions—mango, shredded coconut, chutney, all the savours of the East—and the rice is a snowy dream. After tiffin some of us had a siesta, and others went home, and later we all sat round listening to old records on an ancient and beloved gramophone. It was a revelation to watch the men ; outdoor types with nerves of steel, they became soft and sentimental, visibly suffused with longing for the old country as they listened to *A Bicycle built for Two*.

I shall always remember the enthusiasm of one sportsman, genial and cherubic, whose elastic friendliness takes in the whole creation: "Happy" Adams is known throughout the East and travellers returning from the Orient look up smiling at the mention of his name. With an insatiable appetite for life he will devour curry, plant rubber, mix gin-fizz, and become emotional with a wholeheartedness that leaves you enviously gasping. Like most generously built figures "Happy" is at his best and brightest in the dance. They gave us a wonderful party at a local club where, in a temperature which despite innumerable *punkahs*, worked by drowsy *wallahs* through the manipulation of their toes, dissolved one's flesh, he fox-trotted, waltzed, and gorgeously played the fool till the small hours of the morning, disappearing every little while to change his collar, assume a fresh shirt, or renew his entire habiliments from top to toe! The most generous of creatures, he has an unwavering faith in British supremacy, through every department of life, and his colossal optimism would reinfect an entire community of Jeremiahs.

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We found time even in the flood of hospitality to go to Bob's mine. In tin as with rubber Nature has been kind. The lode lies near the surface and deep shafts are not required. We watched men and women washing the ore, following it from the first to the last stage, presided over by a Chinese so adept that by a dexterous turn of the wrist the final grains of earth or sand were separated from the metal.

On the last morning we drove to Ipoh, a neat smart town with a keen local pride, a printing-press, and a magnificent club. We came back by a narrow winding road that took us past one of the most amazing testimonies to man's endurance and skill that I have ever witnessed. Sheer from the ground huge primeval pinnacles of stone confronted us, implacable, untempered. It seemed incredible that native strength and ingenuity could permeate them. Looking closer one realized how notable a conquest had been made. Hewn out of the cliff, yet remaining part of it, was a temple to Buddha. Shrines and small temples cluster the countryside, but here was a fane vast, impressive, awe-inspiring. Curious carvings adorned the front, long vistas pillared and arched revealed great galleries cut through the heart of the mountain, winding higher and higher in an ecstasy of effort that touched the quick of wondering admiration.

How many hours, days, months of unremitting physical stress had gone to the making of this place sacred with human sweat and blood? An immeasurable weight pressed down—thousands and thousands of tons—upon the temple, a movement of the ground, a tremor of the hills—imagination faltered at the vision of crashing chaos. But unperturbed and unafraid the Chinese worship, and no one can dispossess them. They have planted their church on an impregnable rock graven with endurance, encrusted with sacrifice.

## CHAPTER III

### THE COLOUR BAR

SINGAPORE is the brightest, most colourful place imaginable. In this medley of East and West, you will find a block of European offices on the corner of a Malay street, Chinese shops bunched together in a British quarter—everywhere kaleidoscopic variety. We arrived in a blaze of sunshine after a night on the F.M.S. Railway with its excellent cooking and good restaurant cars. I hungered after the mixed population of the third-class carriages, but it was not to be.

“You simply can’t do it,” said Bunny firmly. “You’ll let down British tradition hopelessly if you travel with the crowd. You simply must go first-class. People won’t understand and it will react on our friends.”

It was a struggle; the rear carriages were swarming with attractive *sarongs*, lovely *saris*, beautiful little babies, old women, and preposterous bundles, and I ached to go amongst them, but as apparently my inconsiderable presence would have lowered British supremacy I had to submit and sit in detached state facing an English Government official with a stony face and a woman with a lofty eye but an incurable habit of silently sniffing. She made no noise, but perpetually wrinkled her nose, so that I longed for a reassuring explosion. I was afraid her suppressed snuffle might pursue us in the *Menelaus*, but we thankfully disembarked her at Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaya. Dull, clean, conventional, for all the world like an English provincial town, it flares into sheer impossible fantasy in some of the public buildings which break

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into a rain of minarets and domes! Unofficial architecture is more sedate. The Spotted Dog, a popular centre of Western civilization, is eminently sober. The club indeed has fallen on bad days and only fills up once a week when residents for miles around drink mild *pahits*, lemonade, and whisky *ayer*.

Our fellow-passengers, the Nonconformist padre and his wife, took us round the town and gave us a great send-off at the station, where, with the mixed tribes of the country, we discovered large, fat, impassive figures twinkling cupidity. Of Indian extraction, these worthies are all moneylenders who prey upon the native peoples and hope to cull fresh victims from incoming trains.

And then in the early morning, after a good night's rest, we steamed into Singapore. The docks are a marvel of organization, every vessel has a bay or, as I prefer to call it, a pigeon-hole duly numbered where she loads and unloads. The *Menelaus* was berthed near the entrance and we returned to her as to our home. Most of the passengers had already disembarked; for some it was the end of the journey, others were flying round in a joy-ride. We found a visitor aboard waiting to see us, and full of curiosity went to the little smoking-room on deck. I shall never forget my delight when in the manager of Singapore's chief paper I recognized my friend the printer who in the long ago had helped me put the *New Witness* to press.

It was during the War years and the most stormy of the paper's existence. The editor, my husband, was in France, and as his representative I used to wrestle with Mr Gates over an article he suspected was libellous, an attack upon the politicians he could not endorse. But though we argued we remained quite happy, and now thousands of miles from our Fleet Street haunts we met again. There is a special brotherhood of the Press. No man is too far, no place too remote, to welcome an old colleague or discover a new one.

Later that morning we joined forces with the vagabond,

who introduced us to one of the favourite pastimes of the port—going from boat to boat just before weighing anchor, to see the passengers off! There are inevitably friends of the departing in the original groups, but all sorts of strays are gathered up as they go along—we went to four ships that morning and fluently wished *bon voyage* to ten total but very charming strangers, winding up in the beautiful steamer that was taking Dutchy and his gramophone to Batavia. We drank large lagers, promised (and meant to keep our promise) to exchange letters regularly, and caught the launch only in the nick of time just as the ship was under way.

And so to Raffles—the hotel called after the genius who envisaged the possibilities of Malaya—for a *pahit*, and on to the Europe to lunch. Every stopping-place in the voyage is punctuated not only by individual interest or beauty but by its own particular and seductive drink. Singapore has a marvellous ‘gimlet,’ compound of gin, lime-juice, water, and pounded ice, and Bunny found joy in a “Number Dua,” a pleasant mixture with a Malayan taste. The Europe is all British with Chinese waiters and French cooking. Here I met one of the few men who, living in the East, has troubled to understand the ramifications of its politics, psychology, and economics. A brilliant journalist, he is editor of the *Straits Times*—a loss to Fleet Street but a gain to British interest. His knowledge and experience officially utilized would have saved us some of the worst blunders we have perpetrated. But as I always discover at home or abroad, the Government never taps the real authoritative source for information.

He and his charming wife have many Chinese contacts and friendships, founded on understanding. But they are exceptions to the majority of Britishers, who usually refuse any equality, mental or social, to the most cultured Easterner. The Englishwoman in the Orient as a rule does little to uphold the best traditions of her race. To me she appears amazingly self-indulgent, not to say slothful.

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Her domestic cares are nil. Number One runs the household, managing the staff and the catering, superintending the cooking and keeping a watchful eye on all expenditure.

"You can keep nothing from Number One," a resident told me. "He knows your income, judges your resources, decides how much you can afford and just how you ought to spend it. For instance, we had a marvellous but most extravagant cook, but the Boy came to the conclusion he was too expensive to keep. He put the case before me, pointed out the excessive cost of the prodigy, and wound up by telling me he had already paid him off!"

The arrangements for a dinner-party never trouble the hostess. She tells Number One whom she has asked—if he has not already heard—and he does all the rest. The success of the *menu*, like the prestige of the house, is his *panache*. The entertainment must equal, if not surpass, the neighbours', and if any table appointment be lacking in elegance he borrows a superior article from next door, so that not infrequently a guest will recognize the family silver or eat from her own porcelain plate.

Meanwhile "Missy"—the generic term for the white woman—goes for an early ride after morning tea, returns to breakfast, and from nine-thirty till tiffin between one-thirty and two-thirty plays bridge in a feminine conclave that shifts each morning to another member's home. The afternoon is spent in siesta, tea is followed by tennis or a swim. Then comes the hour for *pahits* when every one drops in for a friendly chat, and dinner is rounded off by a rag, a visit to the talkies, or a party of *mah-jong*.

Children are sent home to England at four or five years old. Up till then they are cared for by a Chinese *amah*, who takes charge from the moment of their birth. And so life for "Missy" runs in an easy social groove undeflected by outside interest. Few women seem to know any more Chinese or Malay than is necessary for the direction of their servants, and in most cases the historical or social reactions of either race leave them supremely indifferent.



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Up-country this is not the case. Like our friend Beryl, most wives and mothers seem to take an active and intelligent part in the development of the district, its industries and aspirations. But in the international cities there is a mental lethargy, a spiritual somnolence among the women amazing and a little terrifying. No one stands still in character development, and failing growth there must be disintegration, with a consequent loss of prestige in the eyes of Eastern peoples. Chinese perception as to personal calibre is remarkable. At a glance they can place man or woman in the appropriate category.

It is, I admit, difficult to uphold the banner of the ideal. The climate is insidious, the stimulant of physical things immediate, the reaction to more enduring factors slow and difficult, while the social barrier between the white and even the most cultured Malay or Chinese needs courage and personality to overcome. But for the most part my fellow-countrywomen in the East seem to lack these qualities, and I have formed my conclusions not on a flying visit to Singapore, but on my experiences and observations during months of travel. Broadly and generally I incline to the opinion expressed by a distinguished statesman, that British prestige probably received its first blow in the East with the arrival of the British woman.

Singapore has many and varied beauty spots—the lovely drive known as The Gap, where love's young dream parks blissfully, supremely unconscious of serried ranks of cars; the Botanical Gardens, where all those exotic varieties reared with difficulty in glasshouses at Kew flourish under the open sky, wantonly profuse. Other sights and scenes were reserved for the return journey, when we were promised an excursion to the New World, the Chinese pleasure centre.

It was at Singapore that I first came in contact with the Eurasian problem, which ferments throughout British possessions in the East. Marriages of miscegenation inevitably bring social cleavage and racial heartburning, but

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it is on the children of white and brown or yellow strains that the full tragedy of repudiation and ostracism falls. Rejected by both sides, they are driven by the leaven of Western blood to desire affiliation with the white, and the knowledge that they are banned so inflames the desire that too often they become unbearably arrogant or shrinkingly servile. Eurasian children do not attend British schools nor may Eurasian young people mix with the white at clubs, sports-grounds, or dances. However brilliant or charming the victim may be, the ban is always there. Eurasians serve in the shops, staff the offices, own large estates, and conduct big businesses, but even though born to British citizenship they are outcast.

I have been told a hundred times that if we were to countenance mixed marriage and Eurasian offspring, our prestige would decline. The direct proof to the contrary, as I see it, is shown by France, who, following the classic tradition *civis Romanus sum*, gathers all colours and breeds under her rule into one homogeneous whole. White and coloured share the same classrooms, attend the same lectures, meet on the games-ground or in their homes. As in Paris so in the East. No alien-complexioned creature seethes in social rebellion, the brown or yellow wife of a Frenchman is received on equal terms by her white compatriots—she is of their flag no matter what her skin or ancestry. It is the same with the men and the children. France is rearing a population to rise up and call her blessed while we, complacently deaf and blind, suffer generation upon generation to hold us in hatred and contempt.

One incident in this connection I shall not easily forget. It was at one of those club dances, pleasantly informal, which always draw a crowd. A young man, greatly daring, had brought an Eurasian girl with him. She was daintily dressed and to the unaccustomed eye appeared no darker than a European brunette. They both danced beautifully, but I noticed that whereas he occasionally

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changed his partner she remained definitely and (I thought) rather cruelly overlooked. She must have had pluck to have endured the ordeal—insensitive, some one described her, but however you explain the attitude she must, I felt, have been horribly hurt. It sounds, I know, quite easy to solve the difficulty thousands of miles away, and I shall be reminded that Eurasians generally speaking are difficult people. But the fact remains that like the rest of us they are the creatures of their environment and rejected by us to-day they may precipitate our overthrow to-morrow.

We got aboard late that night and were awakened at a prodigiously early hour next morning by a vast movement on deck—soft padding footsteps, twittering voices, harsh cries, innumerable bumps and thumps. Four hundred unemployed Chinese men, women, and children were to be shipped back to their native Hong Kong. Hung round with household possessions they swarmed up the gangways, hugging great bundles in coconut matting, brown-paper parcels, neat leather cases, enamel pails packed to overflowing, wicker cases, string bags, every kind and shape of baggage.

The women, festooned with belongings, carried a baby strapped on the back, a toddler in hand, a small child clinging on behind. The men in dark blue cotton coat and trousers or white singlet and pants, their heads clean-shaven like their faces, brought up the rear with more children and additional gear. The women's short black trousers and white coats high to the neck were very pleasing, their dark hair bound smoothly to the head shone thick and glossy. The slimness, the sheer elegance of their figures amazed me. One after the other, a never-ending crowd of femininity trooped past, not an ugly curve amongst them—the mother of eleven, slender and straight as a young beauty of sixteen, with the natural silhouette which English women, through agonies of diet, strive to attain. Racial breeding showed in their hands—coolies,



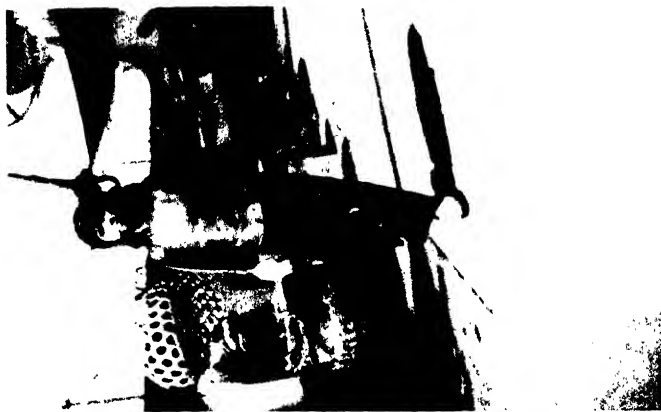
"LITTLE WATER - MUCH SPLASH"

(p. 49)



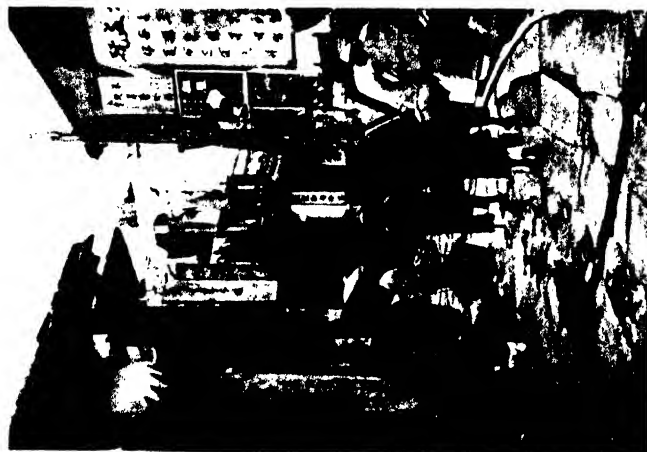
"FESTOONED WITH BELONGINGS"

(p. 48)



"A YOUNG COOLIE GIRL"

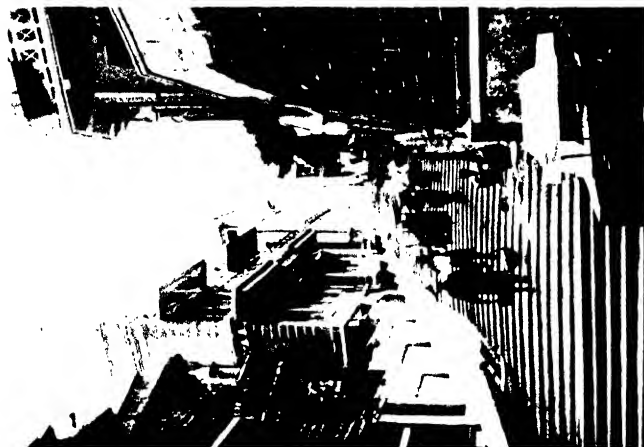
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"CLUCKING HENS, WANDERING DUCKS"

*Photo Breuer, Hong Kong*

17, 68.



"A WONDERFUL PERSPECTIVE"

*Photo Breuer, Hong Kong*

17, 66.

clerks, dock labourers, students—married women and girls, all with slender tapering fingers, well-shaped nails, arched insteps, and small ears close to the head. Pressing together they swarmed over the decks while harassed embarkation officers strove wildly to keep tally.

The Chinese live and move and have their being in dense formation, but with an incredible sense of order they automatically sorted themselves into groups, and within an hour each household had ranged itself in closest contiguity to the next.

The lower decks fore and aft were like an encampment. Each family sat round its belongings, under an awning of matting, coloured blanket, or bright strip of cloth, rigged up on the ubiquitous bamboo pole. A baby enjoyed himself in a basin with little water and much splash, while his sister, a young coolie girl, looked on. Imagine the fuss and bother attendant on the embarking of four hundred European deck-passengers, the complaints, arguments, the resentful accusations of pushing and scrambling. But China, as I realized that morning, has an inborn capacity for home-making independent of surroundings, and, deprived of normal material, adapts the nearest substitute to hand.

“Will they all sleep on deck?” I asked. “Suppose it rains?”

They would find cover in the hold, I was told, but most of them would curl up under the open sky. They were all shepherded and generally conducted by the *compradore*, a very fat and greasy man with small close-set eyes and a straight line for a mouth, which in a Chinese is exceptional. The *compradore*, an ancient institution, acts as *liaison* officer between the two parties in matters of transport, labour, trade, politics, or any other human activity. He gets a bedrock figure from one side and makes his profit out of the other, cutting down wages or raising prices as occasion serves. ‘Squeeze’ is the name given to this amiable process, and it dominates the entire Chinese social system,

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from thousands of dollars to a few copper cash. It is as general but not so glaring as the graft of the United States, and custom has ingrained it so deeply that it clings closer than a skin.

But the sight that amazed and thrilled me was Chinese night-life on board the *Menelaus*. Bunny and I looked at the seething yet cohesive mass of human figures from the promenade-deck; now and again a coolie crossing from fore to aft would drift by, a mother in heelless slippers patter along with a bunch of children, but the attraction lay in the vivid, richly coloured human tide that ceaselessly ebbed and flowed.

"Let's slip down on our own," said I. But Bunny knew a better way. She sent a smile in the direction of the First Mate and in a flash we were following him through a maze of bodies—the Chief Engineer joining on at the end of the queue. All about us were figures stretched prone on the deck, huddled against ventilators, crowding the hatches, some of them partly clothed, others lying naked in complete simplicity and deep unconsciousness of the continuous moving of barefoot passers-by. One by one, with infinite care, we made our way treading fearfully and delicately. The least slip and a heel might graze an outflung arm, an upturned face. There is to me always something awe-inspiring, almost frightening, in the impact of a strange people locked in heavy slumber, but never have I been so conscious of the mystery of sleep as on that night.

The ship held on her way smoothly, imperceptibly; under a sky of radiant starshine we seemed motionless, steeped in the languor of a thousand heats. My thoughts hung suspended over the tired souls about our feet. What if they should awake—and awakening realize their co-ordinated strength—sweeping us from what they might have felt was an impertinent pilgrimage? But none of them moved, even when their fellow-passengers trod not across but on their bodies.

Occasional groups, wide awake and highly concen-

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trated, gathered about a table or a packing-case where a fantan school was in full swing. Fantan is a pure gamble, and to me a most fascinating game. Cards are my despair—or rather my partner's—but to take a risk on the chance of a number materializing from the blue is real relaxation!

The dim glow of an oil-lamp lit up the intent faces, the unwavering eyes of the crowd, all watching the ivory chopstick in the banker's hand. Like a snake it darted in and out of the heap of glittering shells before him, removing four at every stroke.

Under its swift yet monotonous action the heap of shells grew smaller and smaller until—the final count reached—the winners were paid out, the stakes gathered in. You bet that one, two, three, or four shells will be left at the post, and you put your money on a square of cardboard divided in four parts. Hour after hour the fantan schools went on. Men won, men lost; past savings, future possibilities, changed hands, but not a face faltered, not a hand shook.

"They'll gamble the shirts off their backs," said the Mate; "the whole of their present possessions, and their probable earnings, and—what is more—pay up without batting an eyelid."

The Chinese habit of gambling, as I see it, is compensatory for the unremitting output of effort and will necessary to wrest a bare subsistence from their native earth. Exhausted and without opportunity for lying fallow, the ground, tilled and retilled, gives a decreasing yield until famine enforces a respite and millions of starving people are driven to stay their hunger with lumps of soil or to tramp incredible distances in search of food. The gambling sense runs through the whole nation. For while many generations have taken to commerce they are still united to the land, and through the clans their hopes and fears, profits and losses, fluctuate with her fortunes.

A Chinese on his small plot will save and stint and turn to profitable account what a Westerner would lightly



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throw away, but avarice in the sense of that possessive grip, the fear of parting with an iota of wealth, explicit in European peasantry, is not part of the Chinese ethos, which includes the urge to risk the very rice which supports life upon a hazard. It is the one escape from a perpetual penury more grinding than the English mind can easily comprehend.

If the gambler wins there may be high holiday; if he loses he returns to his toil and slowly, laboriously, with a tenacity outside our knowledge, builds up anew.

Beyond the gaming-tables I stumbled over an old man staring seaward with vacant eyes. He held a long pipe between finger and thumb, the red embers still faintly glowing.

"Opium," said the Mate laconically. The poor soul like many another had gone to the land of his forefathers, and noting his thin frame and narrow shoulders, calloused by years of burden-bearing, I was glad he had found a breath of peace in whatsoever way it came to him. So patient, so aged, so incredibly worn, his fine drawn face seemed to reproach our well-fed bodies and care-free minds.

Below hatches in a vast hold looming far in the distance men and women, children and young girls, stretched themselves in slumber; deck-chairs filled the floor space, with an occasional mattress; naked babies lay wearily on bare boards or curled up on their mother's lap. A slim thing of sixteen hugged a bonny boy to her breast, a great-grandmother hushed a crying child; family groups ate their evening meal, drank tea, or fanned themselves with a graceful turn of a flexible wrist. The twittering, high-pitched chatter, so strangely unfamiliar to Western ears, went on unceasingly, but throughout that dense throng so tightly packed that to the onlooker it brought a sense of claustrophobia ran an implicit observance of the standards of polite demeanour. The Chinese live always in a crowd; to be alone is not only unthinkable but undesir-

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able. It is a crowd, however, and not a herd, with highly organized social obligations, rules, and customs. Bad manners are an offence, reticence and dignity the racial habit, public decorum an obligation that disallows the least familiarity of gesture. Boys and girls, wives and husbands, aboard the *Menelaus* talked and laughed, ate and drank, in individual communism, but the traditions of social observance remained unbroken. The most eagle-eyed seeker of undesirable behaviour would have drawn a blank.

An amazing revelation of social training it gave me, a better understanding of the people, for which I can never be too grateful.

It was but a hand's breadth between the lower deck and the smoke-room, but the difference of orientation was immeasurable. I found some of the new passengers in close talk. All the women and most of the men had left the ship at Singapore, and their places had been taken by a mixed contingent, including a Chinese business-man with fluent English, two Eurasian women, a spruce young Prussian, and a British publicity agent.

The Prussian and an Irish navigation officer bound for his ship at Hong Kong were discussing the recent Japanese attack on Shanghai.

"It was inevitable," said the officer. "The Chinese needed a licking; our only mistake was that we didn't give it to them."

"Why?" I asked humbly but determinedly.

"They would have known then that we meant business," I was informed. "You see, they've got beyond themselves. Ever since that disgraceful business at Hankow in 1927 when the Chinese attacked us and our Foreign Office gave them back the British Concession, they've been insufferable."

Over and over again throughout my Chinese travels this Hankow business—the anti-foreign outbreak of the Chinese, the return of the Yangtze Concession by Britain

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—was raised. But not until I went up the river and heard on the spot the story of what happened, could I get an unimpassioned account of the facts. What I found on the journey was a strong resentment against China for desiring to be mistress in her own house, and at the same time the continual complaint that she could not enforce order.

“Yes, it was a big mistake to give back the Concession,” the Prussian agreed. “You should have sent gunboats up the Yangtze to bombard Hankow. That would have brought China to her knees.”

The publicity agent agreed, so did the Eurasian women, one of whom assured me that her father was a Scots parson who had married the daughter of an English army officer.

“China,” continued the Prussian, “has got to be taught, and if Great Britain won’t do it, Japan must. Japan’s a marvellous country, well governed, well sanitized. The people are clever, clean, and adaptive.”

The navigation officer nodded. “A Jap has a bath every day, but the Chinese live in sheer filth.”

“As we used to,” I agreed. “Cleanliness has only become a British trait in the last fifty years, and it wasn’t till after the War that Downing Street had even one bathroom.”

But argument availed no more than geography. The fact that Japan is a small country, marvellously irrigated, while vast areas of China are meagrely watered was not taken into consideration. That Europe fifty years ago, like China, had neither comprehensive drainage nor an efficient water system seemed beyond their computation.

“The Chinese are all right if they’re kept under,” said the Prussian. “But they simply must be brought to heel. The country’s overrun with bandits, Communism’s rampant, and if the Japs hadn’t invaded Shanghai the Nineteenth Route Army would have attacked the International Settlement and hundreds of women and children would have been killed.”

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"And then there was the boycott. Japan couldn't be expected to swallow that." It was the Irishman who spoke, and remembering that the boycott was the offspring of his native land I felt that some sort of demonstration was called for.

"But you can't think people should be coerced to buy Japanese goods if they don't want to?"

He shrugged.

"It's civilization, you know. China is years behind the times, and she's got to be brought up to date. As I say, it is up to us, but if the Home Government's too weak Japan will take on the job."

The Prussian nodded cheerily.

"A few bombs will change their talk," said he.

The supposition that might *must* be right was dreadfully hurtful. Nobody seemed to remember that we had fought a ghastly war to try to prove the contrary, and I think I might have been tempted to remind them but for the vagabond, who, lurking in the doorway, drew me on to the deck.

"It's no use," said he. "You know and I know they're talking through their hats, but it's hopeless trying to make them see sense. They've got the Shanghai mind."

Later I realized all that is implied by that expression. But like so much else it was quite new to me.

"But why do they admire Japan so much?" I queried.

"Big guns and bluff," he answered. "China has neither."

He told me, in the charming and inimitable manner that is God's gift to vagabonds, of his adventures, the undying friendship and fidelity of Chinese whom he had known, and as I listened I grew comforted.

"Up the Yangtze things are quite different. There you'll meet men who know the country and the people, and understand their difficulties, their endurance, their unconquerable genius. It's only those who touch the fringe of China who get silly ideas. The trouble is that

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the fools don't realize that if the Japs do get a stranglehold we shall be the first to suffer. . . ."

Next day we were in the latitude of the great pirate stronghold of Bias Bay. Here for centuries buccaneers have raided the seas and taken home their captive ships to be gutted and destroyed or refitted. At Bias Bay passengers are held to ransom and according to report enjoy a most convivial time.

The *Menelaus*, however, was too big to tackle. Nevertheless a tense thrill ran through the ship when suddenly, like a wind, there rose a whisper that pirates were aboard. It happens sometimes on the Yangtze that first-class passengers suddenly abandon their philosophic calm and appear before the captain revolver in hand, demanding the ship or his life! Occasionally the attempt succeeds, more often bluff fails and the fake passengers find themselves in irons. But the risk is always there, and the sense of danger quivered in every timber of our huge ship.

It was early morning when a rushing of feet from the fore and the aft decks, hoarse and alarmed cries, stentorian voices raised in command, brought us out of our berths. Through the port-hole at the far end crowds of excited figures passed and re-passed, the narrow cabin vibrated with emotion.

What had happened?

We dressed hastily and went on deck to find out.

## CHAPTER IV

### “SO FIERCE HE LAID ABOUT HIM AND DEALT BLOWES”

**T**wo figures motionless beyond any power of Western immobility were lying in stretchers on the hatches of the promenade-deck—a young man and an older woman, heavily bandaged about the head and breast. Their eyes were open, their faces grey with pain; there had evidently been a considerable dust-up. By this time, however, the excitement on the lower decks had died down and the wounded were lying in peaceful isolation, the passengers being too hot on the blood-trail to worry. Now if anything trivial or important should happen to break a ship's daily routine, an iron silence falls immediately upon the *personnel*, an ingenuous innocence which questions the existence of the incident at all.

“Anything wrong?” you ask, and though sparks may be flying, blood flowing, officers and men alike turn a bland and non-committal face to the most persistent inquirer. I had already realized this maritime peculiarity and knew better than to try interrogation. Meanwhile the explanation evolved by the publicity passenger was that there had been a plot to seize the ship, foiled at the last moment by a scrap between the rival factions, quelled in the nick of time by the valorous behaviour of the First Mate, who had ventured unarmed into the thick of the fray. We gathered that though the stretcher cases were the only serious casualties, sufferers from minor injuries crowded below! The publicity merchant's description reached such unbelievable empurplement that we all

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thanked God for the stout arms and British hearts which had protected us!

Now the Mate's heroic conduct obviously called for chronicle and after lunch I found an opportunity to hear those personal details dear to every writer's heart. We met him coming from the bridge. A loose-built man with big limbs and an amiable *embonpoint* below the waist-line, that afternoon he looked quite menacing.

"About this morning," I asked, "will you tell me just what happened?"

"Come into my cabin," he said mysteriously, and a determined look spread over his jolly moonlike Welsh face. We followed meekly and obediently sat down. "It was a bad business," he said laconically. He stared sternly at the door, and, following his glance, we saw a huge and really terrifying implement of iron standing in the corner.

"My battle-axe," he said gloomily, "it's always there—within reach of my hand."

With a gesture he plucked it forth for our inspection. Horrified we realized that the weapon—a gigantic spanner, it assumed the likeness of a medieval axe—was clotted with wet blood!

"Yes," he nodded sardonically, "it's blood all right—lots of blood. Heads were split open this morning."

Bending closer it seemed to us a fragment of skin—or was it flesh?—clung to the iron, and yes, a clump of hair! We looked at him appalled—almost cowering.

"It had to be," he said. "Weakness is criminal in a case like this."

"You—you?" I asked.

He waved me aside.

There followed a description of the morning's *fracas* that would have made the stoniest flesh creep. Sounds of tumult had aroused him and, dashing down into the hold, he had found a seething mass of fighting men; one—two—three—Excalibur flashed through the air, the tumult

ceased, the ringleaders prone at his feet were stricken to silence.

In his fervour he seized the spanner, whirling it about with such a fire that I feared Celtic enthusiasm might lead him to demonstrate on our defenceless heads. We sat abashed like frightened children drinking in his words.

It seemed to me a humorous twinkle occasionally lit up his eye, and when at last, faint yet still pursuing, we staggered out on to the deck, I caught Chips, the large impassive carpenter, in a long portentous wink!

But it was not either of these things that blew the Mate's gaff, if I may be facetious at his expense. We had already noticed that the 'gore' upon his spanner was all too newly spouted to have any reference to the wounded of the early morning, and with the other horrific spoils of slaughter it had already materialized to us as chicken's blood, with flesh and feathers adhering!

Women are always credulous and journalists inquisitive, argued the Mate, and planned his spoof! He never knew we did not swallow it, and I fancy he always expected the whole dreadful business to appear in print, especially as I bombarded him for days with exhaustive inquiries as to air mails and postal services. And now at last—though perhaps not quite as he thought to see it—I record the Saga of the Battle-axe, with many pleasant recollections!

And the real story?

The Chinese passengers included an elderly and most unhappy man. Mr Pui was that rare thing in China, an individual who could not be at home in the national communal life. Nobody wanted him and he wandered about like an unquiet ghost. On the collection of tickets it was discovered that Mr Pui's was missing. He insisted it had been stolen, but whether this was true could not be answered. At any rate the fare was raised by subscription, and the matter blew over. And then in the middle of the fatal night screams ran through the hold, and he was discovered in a death-grip with another man and a woman



whom he declared to be his wife. He knifed them both before the other passengers could disarm him.

He and his hurts were taken to the fo'castle, the man and woman more seriously injured being brought to the promenade-deck. The whole affair quelled by the Chinese had been quietened down by the Mate, and exploited by the publicity agent, took shape and form in the fabulous spanner.

The offender remained incarcerated to the journey's end. Whether the woman was his wife or the wounded man's remained a mystery. She lay peaceful and submissive till we reached Hong Kong, when with amazing resilience she gathered herself together and went off with her companion—Mr Pui's rival.

The Chinese passenger of the first-class could not help to disentangle the affair. He spoke Mandarin, his compatriots Cantonese, and while—as I afterwards learnt—the first and most classic form of Chinese includes the root-sound of innumerable differentiations so that to be fluent in the one enables you to understand the others, Cantonese is different. With the same mould of features, identical in religion and social customs, millions of Chinese, while they share the national ideography (the pictorial expression of ideas) are unable to converse with one another.

Life passed smoothly after this till we arrived in port. Never shall I forget my first view of Hong Kong. It was not the beauty of the scene which held me—a dense mist blotted out the landscape—but an amazing Chinese invasion which before our eyes was taking place. All round the ship were *sampans*, lighters, every kind and sort of craft, loaded with men and boys. We were still out at sea and I could not think how they were going to get aboard. Their method astounded me. There shot up on all sides long bamboo poles, sinuous, unbreakable, which grappled the deck like bands of steel. And then at an angle of over forty-five degrees the human cargoes emptied themselves

and like ants or flies swarmed up the poles, stout men, thin men, greybeards, boys, the line never faltered, hand over hand their prehensile feet added momentum.

A false grip, a sudden dizziness—trembling I visualized the whole contingent struggling in the sea.

“Who are they?” I asked the Chief. “What do they want?”

“They’re boarding-house keepers,” he answered, “come to collect clients.” The energy, the purpose in those eager figures left me gasping.

As I watched, the deck-passengers sorted themselves in groups, and began to chaffer with the hordes. Nothing in the way of payment or barter is ever lightly concluded in China. Bargaining is not alone an art but a delight, each side yearns for a foeman worthy of his economic skill. The argument went on interminably, now veering to one side, now inclining to the other.

The passengers themselves had undergone a sartorial transformation. Many of the men had changed their cotton suits for well-cut white ducks or the long graceful robe of silk or linen which is the Chinese national dress. The women had clean coats and trousers and some of the girls were wearing a delightful garment of pale coloured silk or beautiful brocade. It was my first introduction to the Chinese woman’s dress, a lovely compromise between national tradition and Western influence. It is worn throughout China by all classes—though most coolie women still retain the coat and trousers. Cut high to the neck—it is considered lacking in modesty to show the throat—the garment hangs straight from the shoulders, cut in to the figure but not fitting close, and fastening on one side. A split a few inches below the knee reveals a glimpse of a slim ankle and slender foot. Elbow sleeves are worn by Miss China, but her mother’s arms are covered to the wrist.

To watch these dainty creatures disembark—they eschewed the bamboo poles and waited for gangways—

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was a lesson in movement and grace. Poised like flowers they seemed to melt into the distance, their luggage neatened and embellished as themselves!

Packed like sardines for days and nights the whole crowd emerged spick and span and individualized. I was conscious of the mysterious strength and inviolable personality of a race that, crowded into the tiniest space, continues to retain a private life in a completely public existence.

In Singapore and Penang you find recurrent strands of the national culture, but it is not till you reach Hong Kong that you get the least idea of the deep-rooted, wide-spread social system which is China. The amazing thing to me is that side by side with this particular expression of life you find England in microcosm—definite and complete.

I have never seen anything so acutely British as the Embankment or *bund*—the general term throughout the East. The harbour, surrounded by gracious hills rising to gradual and umbrageous peaks, is confronted by the most dreadfully undistinguished statues of our late dear Queen, King Edward, his consort, and various hideous bits and scraps of repellent masonry. Under a sky of radiant blue their sheer ungainliness, the lack of all imagination, strikes you like a blow. Solemn, pretentious, in a scene of unparalleled beauty, the smug complacency of these eyesores is an offence. The buildings, banks, and offices complete the picture. Mid-Victorian in their ugliness, one has to remember their solidity to find any possible excuse. We must, I feel, have been an amazing people when a hundred years ago we first acquired the most precious jewel in the British Crown! The calm egotism that could graft those prison-like structures on such an earthly Paradise is almost unendurable.

And yet outside the business quarter of the city, you find England in her sweetest and most gracious mood. The wide smooth roads, tribute to Chinese industry and British

“SO FIERCE HE LAID ABOUT HIM”

engineering skill, pass through leafy glades, smooth green hillsides, a wealth of ordered luxuriance irresistibly reminiscent of a country park.

We were in luck that day. We had called at the enormous offices of the Hong Kong Bank to get some money on a letter of credit, and the manager entertained us royally. We spent the day in his car journeying far and wide through villages where chubby Chinese kiddies played naked in the sun and old women nursed their great-grandchildren; past bathing-pools, deep, translucent; golf-links, smooth and shining in every hole; until we reached the Shekko Club, one of the loveliest spots on earth. The building is modern but substantial, thick walls keep out the heat and withstand the damp, and the appointments are quite charming, wicker furniture, dis-tempered rooms with a kindly and refreshing air of welcome. Chinese house-boys brought us tinkling drinks, electric fans gently stirred the air, the scent of magnolia, freesia, and a hundred other perfumes drenched the atmosphere, and far below a soft and sparkling sea tumbled its billows on the sand.

I forgave the Victorians their ugly statuary when I learned that they had found Hong Kong a sterile rocky promontory and made it a flowering garden. But resentment stirred again when, up the peak, instead of pleasing bungalows or white-roofed villas, we discovered a series of grim dwellings with a strong prison flavour.

“Institutions?” I asked the bank manager. “Hospitals, I suppose, or lunatic asylums, or perhaps a granary?”

He looked at me reproachfully. “The richest people in Hong Kong live up here,” he said. “These are the finest and most expensive houses.”

Solemn-faced, with narrow, heavy grey walls and frowning windows, they seemed to absorb the words as their right. They reminded me of those left-over residences in the north of London, bleak, cavernous, unfriendly.

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"But they keep out the damp," said the manager. "No modern building could withstand the climate as they do. In the rainy season everything gets mildewy, fungus grows on your clothes and covers your boots if you are not careful, and the pictures have to be protected with double glass like the windows. I doubt if a bungalow would survive a year."

His own residence, severe in exterior, was very comfortable inside. The sun had set, the swift tropical night was falling; under the great windows, like a magic carpet, the harbour lay unfolded, bearing the ships that from the far ends of the earth had come to rest. Suddenly, as though an invisible torch had lit them, a myriad twinkling lamps from innumerable mastheads enjewelled the darkness. Wave after wave of shimmering brightness flowed from the shore far out to sea. Peaceful, abiding, the scene had an ineffable serenity. Ships rode at anchor secure and sheltered as a flock of sheep in a home farm.

We came down to the city by cable-car and sedan-chair—a ridiculous contrast that amused us vastly. The car tilted along at an acute angle for all the world like its baby brother at Highgate Hill. The conductor asked for the fares in English, and China seemed very far away. You get an intensely home atmosphere on the British side of Hong Kong, which still preserves the social standards of 1860—reverend *seigneurs*, bankers, merchants, and the rest descend the peak in time for morning service every Sunday with top-hat and morning coat, prayer-book in hand. Night-clubs do not exist, bars and places where you drink close at midnight, as do the select dancing academies where the *jeunesse dorée* are allowed.

Woman—the white variety—remains immeasurably man's inferior. In Malayan clubs the feminine element is strongly present, but Hong Kong forbids the membership of wives, mothers, or single girls. Only at one establishment are they admitted and then only to the basement—higher they must not go. This privilege, I understand,



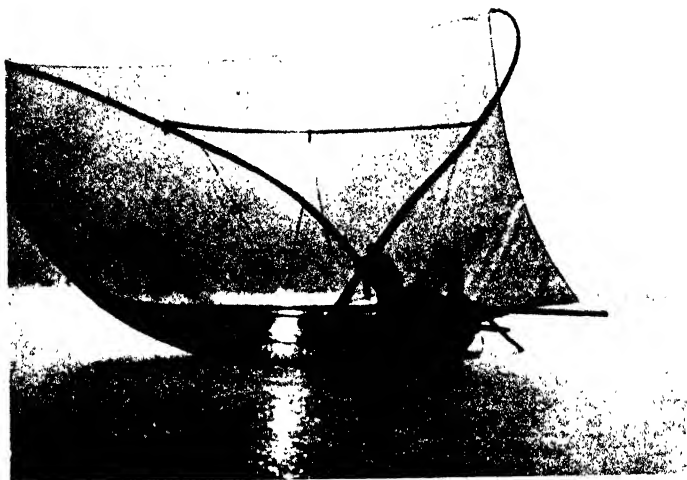
PEKING WATER-CARRIER

(p. 230)



"THE CARTER PATRISON OF THE EAST"

(p. 77)



"A FISHING BOAT WITH SPREADING NET"

(p. 150)



A HONG KONG SAMPAN

(p. 67)

was only granted after a prolonged and revolutionary campaign. With a frusty old code imposed by man, Hong Kong is a male as Singapore is a female city.

From the cable-car we took sedans; I experienced a curious sense of isolated helplessness that first time I was carried, as though, disembodied, I were suddenly in spirit hands. The gentle swaying movement was drowsily pleasant. The soft pad of the bearers' slippered feet had something of the jungle. In the dim light of the street lamps I felt I was being borne to some strange end, and then with a quick run round a sharp corner the bearers drew up at the Hong Kong Hotel.

We had a gorgeous dinner and wonderful wine. I am always interested in the local foods and I can quite safely recommend this caravanserai. Crowded with pretty women, Western and Eurasian, with a good band and perfect waiters, we might have been at the London Savoy or the Paris Ritz. We enjoyed ourselves so much that we almost lost the last launch back to the ship. Our kind friend watched us run along the quay with anxious eyes. I never knew a man less inhibited by banking; he might never have had to wrestle with overdrafts, he is so utterly human!

The next day we explored the Chinese side of the colony. While ricksha-coolies and sedan-bearers punctuated every street, East and West seemed to remain apart, though, as I realized much later, each insidiously affects the other. The Chinese streets of Hong Kong have a piercing vitality: large houses hung with washing flapping in the breeze, low-fronted shops splendid with banners, narrow alleys with broken pavements, clucking hens, wandering ducks, wide thoroughfares thronged with a dense stream of packed humanity—shopkeepers urging the crowd to sample their wares, men of business going to their offices, young girls in exquisite brocade, coolies pushing their way relentlessly. A sudden break in an interminable road revealed a long, steep flight of steps fading off into a wonder-



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ful perspective of old houses and low doorways. Quick, high-pitched voices everywhere, speaking clipped Chinese, with now and again an English word that gave colour and emphasis. Familiar slogans suddenly flared on high buildings, Eno's Fruit Salts cried out for recognition, in close proximity a Chinese chow-shop proudly displayed the name Hop Fat!

In this cheerful, bustling community living content under the British flag I felt proud and elated that we had established Anglo-Chinese reciprocity. I did not realize then that for all her imposing façade Britain has slipped her national moorings. In the easy existence of the Orient the bone and substance of the beliefs that underlie our civilization have curiously weakened. The price of liberty the world over is eternal vigilance, but in Hong Kong vigilance went to sleep, and during her governmental slumbers child slavery has flourished open and unashamed.

I only brushed the fringe of this dark matter on the journey out. Subsequently I unearthed the facts—sufficiently ugly to flick me on the raw. What I discovered I shall recount later.

Across the harbour lay the fertile district of Kowloon, leased for a long term to Britain. Buildings are going up on every side. Chinese riches are pouring in, millionaires are planning houses, factories are opening, in area and wealth the settlement bids fair to rival its elder sister. Municipal councils run the local affairs, Chinese and British being represented. But though the men of the two nations meet together, social relations between their women-folk are practically nil. The cult of white superiority forms an impassable barrier, shutting out the interplay of thought and feeling that makes for human understanding, enclosing all the petty vanities and self-centred emotions that characterize so many Europeans in the East.

From Kowloon we took the ferry—a marvellous service

plies between the two shores—and gazing over the harbour I saw my first fleet of junks, proud vessels built on the lines of the old Spanish galleon. Millions of Chinese live and die aboard, fishing, carrying, plying for hire. The junk is the home to which they bring their wives—from whence they are buried. Small children born to seamanship work the tiller, unfurl the heavy sails, holding the vessel—responsive as a mettled horse—in the teeth of a stiff gale. And round the fleet, like attendant water-sprites, came innumerable *sampans*. Every Chinese port, on river or sea, has its particular shape and variety of *sampan*. Hong Kong's suggests a gondola in shape, and the boatman stands to wield his long oar. Under that cloudless heaven one might have been in Venice but for the deep orange of the sun.

The *Menelaus* was wrapped in silence when long past midnight we got back. I sat upon the deck and watched the hills clear-cut in the moonshine. The mystery, the fascination, the fecundity of this strange land laid hold of me.

I realized with a sharp, expectant thrill that our next stopping place would be—Shanghai!

## CHAPTER V

### THE SHANGHAI MIND

**T**HE ship which for so long had seemed a part of us, centring our thoughts, contriving our comfort and convenience, seemed suddenly to grow aloof, impersonal. The smooth, easy-going daily round stiffened; a feeling of intense, almost uncomfortable activity stirred us to attention.

It was, we realized, time to embark upon the awful business of repacking. Woolly frocks and heavy coats must be reserved for the return journey. Everything light and washable we took.

I have discovered that each country has its own queer baggage laws. In Russia every one carries his own and consequently travels light. In Italy, though hand-luggage goes free and all the carriages are snowed under by preposterous suit-cases, you have to pay passenger fare for heavy pieces until you ache to leave the wretched things behind. In China your belongings, transported sometimes for miles by coolie labour, are charged for at a flat rate no matter what the size or weight. Revelation-trunks, handbags, vast packages, and minute hat-boxes, all strung on the same bamboo pole, are borne over hill and dale, through city street and squelchy morass at thirty cents each. This being so, it is obviously more economical to take one large rather than six small boxes! Not knowing this we shed our trunks and concentrated on our cases. My advice to intending travellers in the Flowery Kingdom is to do otherwise.

It was a melancholy business. The cabins identified for so long with our thoughts and emotions looked bare

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and felt hard, when stripped of our personal associations! We ate our farewell dinner—a marvellous *menu* including roast turkey and Christmas pudding, though the thermometer registered 100° in the shade—attended our final racecourse-meeting on deck, listened for the last time to the wheezy gramophone, and found ourselves in the early morning saying “Farewell.”

We had dropped the vagabond at Hong Kong, with the navigation officer, and the remaining passengers were mere impressions. But the Captain and the officers—the Chief Engineer with his faithful Number One, the First Mate with his battle-axe—were real people, and we left them with regret. The *Menelaus* had been a wonderful experience, and what I had heard of China and the Chinese made smooth the way to more immediate contact.

Shanghai from the landing-stage of the International Bund was not exhilarating. Acutely British, it had the same solidity of aspect I had met at Hong Kong. There at least we had been steeped in sunshine, but here a fine rain was drizzling, very wet and most depressing.

We had already fixed up the vexed question of an hotel. The publicity man had been most helpful.

“I should go to the Metropole,” said he. “It’s the dearest and the newest, but you won’t be eaten by cockroaches.”

The threatened plagues of China seemed to materialize at the words. Money was certainly a big consideration, but cockroaches were an even larger one, so the Metropole won the day, and collecting our traps we got into a motor and drove off. The place might have been bodily lifted from New York. It had the Assyrian touch of modern American architecture; the whole edifice, stucco-fronted, had a backward slant with huge wedge-like pinnacles that tried to scrape the sky.

We arrived safely but surprised—the Orient still seemed hundreds of leagues away. The Shanghai roads are good, the sidewalks paved, the streets well lit and patrolled by

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an infinite variety of policemen—Sikhs with turbans and black beards, Chinese, Japanese, and White Russians, and in the French Concession (distinct from the International) a *gendarmérie* in pale blue. Between the pavement and the traffic run ricksha-coolies, shouted at by Sikhs and Chinese alike. Thin, overworked, underfed, they run and run day after day, dragging a dense flood of sitting humanity.

It was a long time before I grew reconciled to regarding a human being as a means of transport. I cannot easily look on man in the light of a horse, though as a lovely little Chinese lady said to me: "Our men are so clever and so strong we use them like engines."

Most people own cars; those without hire one for three dollars an hour—approximately four shillings—or use human machinery for forty cents! There are also trams—excellently run—which British supremacy rarely uses. We liked them.

The hotel lounge, complete with comfortable chairs, appropriate tables, telephones, and reception office, was emphatically Western. I felt distressingly at home. Prices were to match. There are many scales of payment in China. Those within our experience gave you a choice of renting a room and paying per tariff for what you ate or making an inclusive charge for board and lodging. Permanent residents are taken at a lower rate, and students for even less. Unhappily we did not know this, otherwise the expense would have been much lighter. It must not be supposed that Bunny and I desired falsely to pass as educational pilgrims. The term 'student,' as I discovered, is elastic, and any foreigner between eight and eighty years of age may be regarded as thirsting for culture, and charged accordingly.

This, alas, we learnt too late! I make a present of the information to those whom it may concern.

We secured a large room on the third floor with bathroom attached, reading-lamp, and luxurious fittings.

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"If Shanghai is like this, what shall we find in Nanking?" I complained. "Surely there must be a bit of China somewhere."

All the stories of the city, the dark adventures, mysterious disappearances, opium dens, cups of poison, stealthy-footed men with pigtailed and long knives who lurk and leap round narrow doorways, rose up and called me foolish. Had I travelled thousands of miles to sleep in a West Kensington bed?—I swear the trademark on the bathroom taps bore a London name.

The entry of Number One—an elderly man with a satin-skinned face, a long blue robe, and the manners of a courtier—cheered me up. He drew the curtains, folded up the bedspreads, and announced in pidgin English, "Tailor, missy, come see."

We did not want a tailor, but had no opportunity of saying so. An Americanized version of Young China in a lounge suit followed on his heels and in fluent Yankee offered to make a silk dress for £5—producing copies of *Vogue* to prove his efficiency. We had no desire for a silk dress, certainly not at his figure, but it was very hard to convince him. He went away at last, and a jeweller came in with the slickest possible manner and inferior jade beads at a preposterous price. The methods and appearance of these two men were disappointing, but, as I realized, not in the least typical. In Shanghai as in all the international cities the welter of civilizations precipitates a baffling and unpleasant example of the cheapest kinds of modernism. The tailor and the jeweller probably thought we liked to be treated 'up-to-date.' We had yet to experience the delightful way of approach practised by the traditional traders of China; that was to come later.

A ring on the telephone announced the *North China Daily News*. Would we come round to the office and have an editorial chat?

The *News*, notable for its sane outlook and sound news

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sense, one of the best of the bunch of English dailies, recognizes the fact that Shanghai, while it includes an International Settlement and a French Concession and all kinds and sorts of Westerners and refugees, is primarily and fundamentally China, entitled to a national outlook and aspiration.

Politically, to my mind and in view of the facts, Europe has always treated China with the most cynical criminality. In the opium war of 1839 when she declared the drug contraband we bombarded defenceless cities, killing thousands of men, women, and children, to force its compulsory import from our Indian possessions. History contains no crueller chapter than the fight we waged to compel the Chinese people to remain drug addicts.

The quelling of the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, which had its roots in the anti-foreign feeling engendered by repeated aggression and enforced territorial grants, makes even worse reading. The Great Powers vied with each other in slaughtering, sacking, and pillaging. Peking was ravished, her palaces burnt, her temples degraded. It is said that the French General wept when the Allies decided to fire the Summer Palace—it was, he felt, too beautiful a thing to sacrifice to mere insensate rage.

But while the Powers carved China and quarrelled over her division, a steady fusion of interests on a basis of commercial exchange grew up between British merchants and Chinese. Patriotism—curiously localized—found no difficulty in cementing friendship with members of the race who had devastated the ancient capital and put her sons to death. In Shanghai, as farther up the Yangtze, British tradition stood—and in fact still stands—for fair dealing, while the proverb that the word of a Chinese is better than his bond holds good to this day.

All that happened to disturb this state of things, to break the union forged beyond and above military aggression, I gradually realized. I have always had an appetite

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for tracking objective reality and I think in part at least that I succeeded.

To begin with, I found that the International Settlement in Shanghai has two phases. One of them turns to pleasure; luxury at its most lavish, easy emotional excitation, are so instinctive that social stability, in the sense of reticence and restraint, is difficult; a hectic appetite for sensation frays the nerves and induces recurrent attacks of public hysteria which unpleasantly impress the most dispassionate observer. Now the psychological position of the Settlement renders it an easy prey to neurosis. Surrounded on three sides by an ingrowing Chinese population, the only direct outlet being by the sea, the consciousness of China's teeming millions pressing from without, her rapidly increasing numbers within, induces a kind of claustrophobia. The dread of being shut in breeds morbid fear with cruelty, its attendant twin. And under the stimulus of an imaginary attack by an inflamed populace, the Chinese are visualized as cruel, rapacious cut-throats capable of any enormity. This apprehension is doubtless intensified by the memory of the Communist riots of 1925, when an attempt was made to storm the International Settlement, and Japanese mills and factories were burnt down. But though some twenty Communists were killed by the combined fire of the Nationalist troops and Settlement police, no European lost his life and only one was wounded.

Side by side with this unbalanced ebullience goes the steady routine of sober effort for the rehabilitation of trade and the consolidation of Anglo-Chinese relations. This section, though influential, does not materially affect the outlook of the other. I drew my conclusions from observations on both.

My first experience of local feeling was at a dinner-party on the night of our arrival. Our host and hostess, pleasant and quite wealthy people, had been resident some time in Shanghai, but except for boating excursions



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up the Yangtze they did not know the country beyond. They were surprised by my eagerness to understand just what was happening—whether the boycott would continue, if the Japs were likely to invade North China; but they were not interested. Trade prospects filled the bill.

“Business is bad, and it will get worse,” said my host. “It will about last my time out here, and that’s all. You can’t hope for improvement in a country like China, full of Communists and bandits.”

“Surely,” I suggested, “acts of banditry are not more common in China than in Chicago.”

“You can’t compare the two,” he insisted. “Chicago’s civilized—China’s barbarian.”

“And the gunmen and the bootleggers?”

“They don’t count really. Anyway, it’s only Americans who are in danger there; out here anybody’s throat might be cut.”

I urged that according to official and newspaper reports Chinese bandits rarely murder a foreign captive. But the argument fell flat.

“China ought to have been divided up long ago,” said a young man excitedly, forgetting, I suppose, that the only reason for her being left intact was that the Concert of Europe could not agree as to their individual shares in the partition.

“You can’t judge things properly till you have lived here,” he continued. “I know Shanghai through and through and I look on the Chinese as a dangerous dirty lot.”

“What do you think we should do with them?” I asked in my sweetest voice. “Should we shoot or merely burn them?”

There was an awkward pause which Bunny loyally tried to bridge by a dissertation on the talkies, already in full swing—Chinese and English both—in the Settlement. But her efforts were useless. I was obviously pro-Chinese and, as such, anti-British.

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"But they'll get what's coming to them," the young man went on bitterly. "Japan won't stand any sentimental nonsense."

Neither he nor those who think like him seem to realize that Japan's action in regard to China is not in the least altruistic, and that if her military designs succeed she will inevitably give us notice to quit. All through the Settlement I met this nervous worship of Japan's big guns, coupled with a distressing insensibility to the moral issue. To Young England in Shanghai the strong arm is of necessity blessed.

This hostility and its underlying terror made me disturbed and unhappy that first night. I felt I needed reassurance, that I must get into touch with the teeming thousands encamped round and about the luxury hotels, the wealth, the opulence of the West. I persuaded Bunny to go to bed; the extreme humidity—Shanghai in June is like a Turkish bath—was getting her down, and I went off by myself to have a look-see at China.

Within a stone's throw of the hotel lies the Foochow Road, with its small shops, huge families, and Eastern smell—arid, aromatic, curiously disturbing. The people were still abroad; Shanghai never goes to bed, the rich turn night into day, the poor doze standing. The shops blazed with electric light, their low traditional fronts crowded with the delicacies of old Cathay—roast fowls, ducks, wild game, and well-fed pigeons, varnished to a deep lustrous brown, hung in long rows; restaurants or chow-shops full of savoury odours, packed tight with coolies eating rice and succulent messes from small bowls; junk stores piled to the doors with every imaginable kind of furniture and the fragments thereof; lovely lacquer tables, broken chairs, Tientsin rugs, bits of old matting, rubbish and beauty in a vast heterogeneous heap, awaiting their customer. Nothing is ever thrown away in China—all things are put to use, transmogrified quite often out of recognition. *Lingerie* establishments exhibited silk

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pyjamas—hand-embroidered in the latest cut—at a figure less than a third of London prices; barbers in the open street shaved their customers' heads and faces; small wine bars sold *samsu*, Chinese whisky, which, made from rice, tastes like sherry; tea-houses dispensed the delicate, straw-coloured liquid void of sugar or milk.

Now and again the curious chant of a street-seller came high and clear above the din. To each calling its separate chant, so that hearing the cry you distinguish the water-carrier from the fruit-seller, the vendor of pots and pans from him who cries a mixture which looks like underdone dough. After a little while the ear becomes attuned to the queer, attractive sounds. The Chinese scale is untempered, of five notes only, but the mutations are myriad and I found them very pleasing. Chinese life on sea or shore moves to a definite rhythm; hawkers, builders, burden-bearers, he who sows or reaps, fishes or hauls, all adjust themselves to the balance of sound.

The atmosphere of the Foochow Road sent my mind back to the *Menelaus*, for there was none of the display that makes Hong Kong so memorable. The banners flying from the shops were smaller, the crowds more meanly dressed, but the tiniest place, the most closely congregated dwelling, had the same feeling as in the Chinese quarters aboard ship. Mothers nursed their infants on the doorstep, women washed clothes upon the pavement, small boys played in the gutter, pretty girls walked with young men in decorous gravity.

At the corner of the Foochow Road you may see within five minutes the whole panorama of Europe's material evolution during the last hundred years. Sweating ricksha-coolies bare to the waist jostle the latest thing in luxury motors; carriers swaying beneath a huge wardrobe or a grand piano balanced on a bamboo pole turn aside for an up-to-date lorry; women in Paris gowns rub shoulders with ragged beggars barefoot and be-sored. The latest model in machinery travels cheek by jowl with

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the one-wheel barrow—the Carter Paterson of the East, which carries furniture and family, farm and factory produce in a tower-like mass that, though it threatens to topple, never seems to fall. All the riches and resources of the Western world intermingle with the simplicity, the poverty, the primitive methods of the East. There are, of course, Chinese millionaires, but pre-eminently the Settlement is an alien growth deep-rooted in the vitals of the people.

And as in Shanghai so with varying degree in every international city—grinding poverty below the deepest European level and arrogant expenditure.

It was my first plunge into actual Chinese existence, traditional and immediate. Exploring farther I gradually grew to know the wealthier and the poorer districts, from the shopping centre of the Nanking Road, with its imposing stores, to the sweating dens of the Yates Road; but, rich or poor, always the national factor of family life persisted.

All the night through, the sounds from Foochow Road drifted up to the Metropole, I heard the chirp-like song of the masons working overtime on neighbouring buildings as they lowered the baskets of brick, the quicker beat that seemed to propel the hammers. I could almost detect the soft pad of the ricksha-coolie, drowned in the sudden rush of a dashing car.

The next day I was lucky enough to arrange an appointment with Stirling Fessenden, one of the most notable figures in Shanghai. An American citizen, he came to China over thirty years ago and from the first was identified with the Municipal Council, which, composed of representatives of every Western nation as well as of Chinese and Japanese, governs the Settlement. He has served the Council both as chairman and secretary and has unique knowledge of the political and economic conditions of the city. Here, I felt, was a hope of learning fact as apart from prejudice.

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I found Mr Secretary Fessenden at the Municipal Buildings in a lofty, well-proportioned room, bristling with efficiency, pleasantly tempered by the big bowl of roses on his desk. He has a chubby figure and an enveloping smile and gives you the impression of owning all the time that ever is or could be. He can, however, with an elegance truly Chinese, check any disposition to drift on into eternity—I doubt if the most determined talker could outstay his welcome.

“What’s the cause of the ill-feeling between the Chinese and the British—and indeed most Westerners?” I asked.

He gave me a most unexpected reply.

“It’s the War mostly,” he said. “The world affair, I mean, not the Sino-Japanese flare-up. When I first came here relations were quite pleasant and business was just as good as could be. There wasn’t an idea that a Britisher or an American could put up a crooked deal, and both of them would O.K. Chinese honesty and honour. There were few bad debts and everything went swimmingly. Factories were started, plants put up, and Westerners and Chinese grew prosperous and content. And then came nineteen-fourteen. As we know, men enlisted from all over the East, some of the very best, and their places were taken very often by an inferior article. Things got worse later, after the Peace. All the blackguards and get-rich-quick guys from England and the States seemed to drift out here. The worst didn’t last long, but they played the devil with decent business methods. They began to cheat the Chinese, who, completely puzzled at first, when they realized what was happening beat them at their own game. There’s not a straighter man in the world than a Chinese if you give him a square deal. But if you try to ‘do’ him he’ll cheat you all along the line, he’s far more subtle and ingenious than the most crafty Westerner. That sort of thing broke a long and fine tradition and bred distrust on the one side and dislike on the other, which has never been got over. The undesirable elements

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have been largely cleared out, but the effect remains. Moreover, young men nowadays haven't the same zest for work—they regard the Chinese as their legitimate profit-makers and react against any attempts at better wages and conditions."

He lit a cigar and I recalled that he had known China under the Manchus, had seen their passing, had been present at the founding of the Republic—that dream made manifest by Sun Yat-sen, which has assumed some likeness to a nightmare.

"I always think it was a pity to wipe out the old verbal contract for the written one," he said reminiscently. "I never knew a Chinese dishonour his spoken word in the old days."

I seemed to see a long line of fine old merchants in pig-tails and moustaches, with marvellous embroidered coats and elongated fingernails in jewelled sheath.

"You see, to ask a Chinese to put his name to an undertaking implies to him a doubt of his sincerity, and not only his but all his ancestors. It is therefore up to him to save his face under the insult and make you lose yours. This he does by fulfilling the letter while breaking the spirit of the contract, whittling away a little here, cutting the quality there, but so astutely that it is very difficult to catch him out. In his own philosophy he is justified. You suggested he might commit fraud and he has carried out your suggestion. Of course modern methods are gradually impinging on Chinese psychology, but not to their immediate advantage or ours."

"Are verbal contracts still used?" I asked.

"Men who know their business generally use them. A Chinese gives not only his word, but the word of all the generations behind him. Before the War if a merchant couldn't pay his dues or deliver his contract his family did it for him. It isn't like that now, but there are still some of the old type left.

"And then," he went on, "China herself suffered a

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certain character-deterioration from the War. She sent millions of coolies to the Front as labourers, and they assimilated tastes and habits foreign to their standards and incidentally acquired an inside knowledge of certain Western ways that did not add to their respect for Westerners. Up to then American and British stock stood high. After—well, the bottom dropped out of the market. The Japanese affair didn't help matters. The Chinese still feel sore against all foreigners. But I think the general feeling has improved even so. Largely, I believe, because of the work the Westerners have done on the dykes. Sir John Hope Simpson will tell you about that. He's Director-General of the National Flood Relief Commission and what he doesn't know about flooded areas isn't worth a row of pins."

I told him I was seeing Sir John later and regretfully—for he is that rare thing, a vital personality—took my leave.

But there were other matters connected with the Japanese attack that I desperately wanted to clear up. The British Press had emphasized the boycott, stressed Shanghai's alarm, and reported the outbreak of street-fighting. But the events leading up to the *émeute* had never been succinctly stated. Now at last I had the opportunity of discovering what had really happened. China has this in common with Russia, that patient search and persistent disregard of officialdom, while observing all its forms, will generally lead you to discovery.

I tracked my man to his official and Western source. Alas, I must not give his name—all the ramifications of intrigue would twine themselves about his neck—but I can vouch for his reliability.

"What really lay behind the Japanese attack?" I asked. "Was it the boycott or the first step in a planned invasion?"

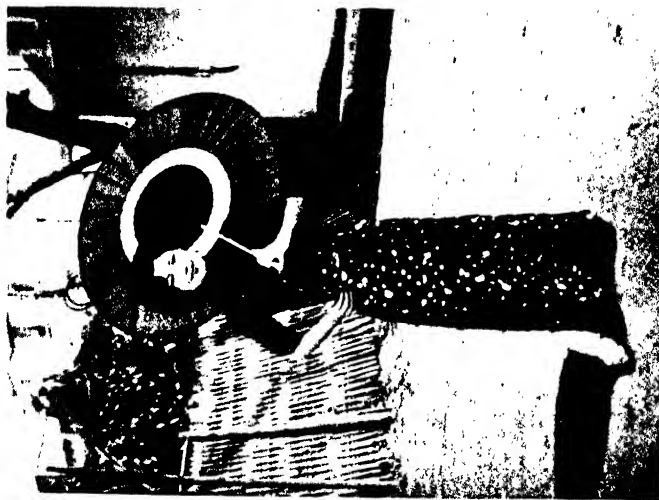
"Both!" was the answer. "The Japs were losing millions through the refusal of the Chinese to buy their



A MERCHANT'S WARES ON THE PAVEMENT

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goods, intensified by Japan's claim after the War that Germany's territorial rights in Shantung should be ceded to her. But the situation was precipitated by the Japanese colony here, which includes a large number of commercial magnates with a big pull on Tokyo. They got the wind up and wired home for protection—if the Japanese Fleet did not demonstrate they might all be assassinated. They had terribly cold feet. So had most of the British."

"The Settlement strikes me as dreadfully feminine," I agreed. "Shies at a shadow like a frightened mare."

"People got badly hustled over the arrival of the Nineteenth Route Army, you know. They encamped outside the city, and it was said they'd moved to Shanghai intending to loot the Settlement. Those who knew realized that the army was on the spot to overlook negotiations between the Northerners and the Cantonese and see fair play for their own side. But rumour ran riot, preparations were made for defence, the Japs lost their nerve completely, sent a final scream to Tokyo, and the Fleet arrived.

"Japan undoubtedly thought it would be a walk-over for her and that she could push victory on to Nanking or farther, but the Chinese put up such an unexpected fight that for the moment she was held. But"—there was a significant pause—"Japan cleared out of Shanghai for quite a different reason."

I waited eagerly.

"It was a case of financial pressure. An instalment of Japan's American loan was due. She was told that she must either withdraw from Shanghai, find the money, or be declared a defaulter. She withdrew all right."

He paused. "There was never any danger to the Settlement from the Nineteenth Army," he said emphatically. "The suggestion was hysteria and bluff. The Chinese Command sent delegates to the Municipal Council, who were completely satisfied as to their intentions.

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Even then war might have been avoided but for a bad bit of treachery."

The air was tense with expectancy. I almost held my breath.

"What I am telling you," he said gravely, "has not appeared in print, but is known to quite a number of responsible people."

He explained that the position had grown so strained that the Council, in view of possible attack and to restore public confidence, decided to post guards at the salient points of the Settlement, each national being allotted its section by the Allied Military Command.

Chapei, a densely populated working-class area abutting on the Settlement and exclusively Chinese, obviously formed a danger-point. The Japanese therefore were posted elsewhere as the least friction might precipitate a clash. But in the night following the Council meeting the Japanese Command changed their position and secretly moved their men to Chapei. A rifle was fired, an unfortunate Chinese killed, the coolies hit back with sticks and stones. A *casus belli* like the forged telegram at Ems had been found. Chapei was literally blown to bits!

I always feel that the secret history of most defensive 'attacks' might reveal a similar likeness to the wolf and the lamb. It was, however, supremely important to have earmarked the facts, which, in full recognition of their gravity, I here set down.

"What will follow?" I urged.

"Japan will come again, and quite probably we shall be told to quit," he answered. "British interests in Shanghai are enormous, but I doubt if we shall fight."

I left with a curious sensation of unquiet. It is a matter of record that we built up our Eastern supremacy by bloodshed and rapine, but while admitting this most of us feel that having got there it is impossible we should not remain! For the first time in my life I realized that

## THE SHANGHAI MIND

it is not improbable that we may have to go. One would, however, prefer to leave with dignity rather than be hustled by Japan. As, however, British vested interests have declared in her favour it seems probable that when she says "Clear" we shall clear, even at the cost of prodigious wealth.

Having expended considerable thought on the serious side of Shanghai, I felt it was time I consorted with the frivolous. The city has a marvellous night-life. Every kind of dance-hall, club, *café*, and restaurant caters for your amusement. Most of them open at 6 P.M. and close at 6 A.M. The band plays, the poor little hired partners dance, drinks and ices, sandwiches, chow, Russian tea, and English eggs and bacon are dispensed according to the type of the establishment.

Now I have always regarded myself as very lucky in that whenever I particularly want to explore a country or a social phase the way seems opened to me! One morning Number One brought a note to say that the writer knew certain of my relations and would like to make acquaintance with me. He had, however, omitted his address, and Bunny, remembering British supremacy and previous unfortunate experience, removed the note to the wastepaper basket, and when the writer 'phoned up to remedy his omission advised that I should refuse further communications. He had an Irish voice, however, and a persuasive manner, and I asked him to come round, and then and there began a most delightful friendship. Peter, we so christened him, had none of the anti-Chinese obsession that in China makes life difficult. He knew and liked the people, had friends in every political camp and social grade, possessed a lovely taste in art treasures and an infallible instinct where to find and how to price them. Moreover, he knew Shanghai's amusement-life from top to bottom. He had also a large and most imposing friend who occupies a position of such civic dignity and power that evil-doers tremble before

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him. His stern face was belied by twinkling eyes, and I secretly called him "Raddy," a kindly abbreviation of Rhadamanthus! These two proposed to take us for a tour through Shanghai's pleasure-haunts, international and Chinese.

I forgot the Japanese menace, the Communist question, even the treatment of the ricksha-coolies, and prepared really to enjoy myself. Bunny was equally pleased; the heavy, moisture-laden air had lightened, a genial if intense warmth raised her spirits and irradiated the streets, the sky—even the Sikh police—looked human. And to our delight Number One arranged to have our frocks most beautifully pressed!

Shanghai, whatever else its faults, knows how to dine. We started at the Cathay Hotel with wonderful food, a perfect floor, and a first-rate band. The *élite* of the Settlement sat at their reserved tables, those at least who were still in town, as the fashionable season ends in mid-June. We waited for a cabaret turn and then moved on. Theatres there are none in Shanghai, though cinemas abound and occasional amateur dramatic shows are given. But every hotel or club stages a cabaret, which in many cases touches the lowest level of talent or technique. Here, I suggest, is a marvellous field for a clever young producer who could travel a small troupe of dancers, singers, and comedy turns. They would go like wildfire in the East and make good money. As it is, the business for the most part is in the hands of Russian refugees, who, to the number of about three to four thousand, have flocked into Shanghai. Not all of these secure engagements, but a sufficient number to make some programmes terribly dull and inconceivably heavy. I have an intense admiration of the Russian genius in ballet and cabaret form, but the performances which give such sheer delight are the result of intensive training grafted on real capacity.

The refugees, poor souls, obviously did not practise any art in their own country nor, in my opinion, did they

## THE SHANGHAI MIND

leave in political exile; most of them between twenty and thirty must have escaped from Soviet Russia not through fear of Bolshevism, but dislike of work. They are not members of the *intelligentsia*—neither do they spring from Grand Duke stock, and in this they are unique. My knowledge of Russia leads me to judge that they are of peasant origin, and, disliking long hours and arduous labour on the State or Collectivist farms, have managed to make a getaway. They are a tragic but deplorable lot. Those who are not cabaret performers are hired partners, shop-assistants, language-teachers, musicians, dressmakers, police, and prostitutes. A few are in journalism and one or two earn a living as black-and-white artists. The rest recruit the lowest of brothels and the meanest form of hired labour. It has been known for a Russian to pull a ricksha, an indelible stain on white blood, or even to beg for alms in the Chinese city. Denationalized, without civic rights, they add to the problems of the city, but, unwarned of their fate, others continually swell their ranks.

From the Cathay we went to the Canidrome, an outdoor pleasure-place of infinite beauty, with a big stage and dancing-floor in the centre, and softly lighted walks planted with trees, flowering shrubs, and exotic flowers. We watched a pair of Filipinos tango, a hefty peasant in a Caucasian number, and under that sky of silver starshine and purple clouds would gladly have seen more. But we had only begun our adventure, and after a couple of waltzes and a fox-trot, we all moved on.

Our next call was at a chummy little place with most attractive partners, the slimmer type of Russian, dark-eyed and melancholy, and flower-like Chinese, slim as willow-wands, some in European, others in national dress. Chinese young men in authentic dinner-jackets of white drill cut Eton-shape danced with Western or Oriental indiscriminately. The fair bevy were looked after by a woman who might have stepped straight from the pages

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of Balzac, huge, white, malevolent, with a moist red mouth, her cold eye watching the girls—were they amusing their partners, inducing them to buy champagne? I could almost hear the crack of the whip. I have seen the same thing in many of the capitals of Europe—Shanghai merely follows international suit.

From the French Concession, where most of the more expensive houses lie, we went to a jolly little haunt, popular and cheap. Here the Chinese were in the majority, men and girls all enjoying themselves to the top of their bent, in the most decorous manner. There are no drink restrictions in Shanghai; you can get whisky, wine, or beer anywhere at any time, but I saw hardly any drunkenness. A little Christian liquor to a lot of water is the Eastern custom—which means that however much spirit you may consume the effect need not become apparent.

Our last port of call—it was getting on for 5 A.M.—was a Russian club some distance off. We passed through Chinese streets busy and thronged as though it were the middle of the day. From the first-floor windows of a restaurant came the blare of instruments, Chinese pipes shrilled with an unearthly likeness to the pibroch, deep-noted contraptions of wood boomed an accompaniment. They were holding a Chinese wedding, and through the windows I caught a glimpse of rich red hangings, incense-burners, festivity and guests.

The club to my surprise was really Russian. A *samovar* simmered on a table, *ikons* were on the wall, huge candlesticks stood in the corner. Here the refugees gather together at impossible hours for *bortsch* and cabbage-soup, caraway-rolls and sunflower-seeds. They sing the mournful melodies of the Ukraine and act excerpts from Tchehov! It has atmosphere and a haunting tragedy. I wish the poor things could go back to their farms.

There are other night-attractions in Shanghai, of varying social degree. Opium dens exist for those who like their dope that way; or it can be savoured in a private

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room at most of the large hotels; and even darker allurements can also be enjoyed. These we did not sample, but wound up at the Ritz, a noisy, rather dirty haunt crammed with workmen and sailors of all nations. The air was stifling, the band raucous, but every one seemed in the best spirits. There were a number of ships in port, and British and American A.B.s were dancing happily.

Bunny and I were fascinated by a good-looking young tar with a very lovely Chinese partner. He chose her again and again, though we gathered neither could understand a word of what the other said. Presently we noticed a stir in the crowd about the door—the American patrol had come to round up their men. The little dancer slipped back to her place, the sailor was told to fall in. But chivalry could not be so cavalier. He crossed to the girl, saluted her, shook hands, and his mates gave him a rousing cheer. It was a pleasing Sino-American *entente*.

Out once more into the noise and glitter of the streets, crowded with cars and coolies wet with sweat; along the Bund calm and stately under the twinkling lamps, with the sea lapping and the giant funnels of great steamers outlined against the sky; past the park where until recently only Westerners might walk. Two or three years ago the notice was still up—"No dogs or Chinese admitted!"

It was on this note that the first part of my Shanghai impressions closed.



## CHAPTER VI

### “ THE PURPLE TESTAMENT OF BLEEDING WAR ”

THE Settlement seemed to have little left for me to discover. I felt I wanted to go farther afield, to Chapei, the Chinese city, and all its environs which form Greater Shanghai. Above all I wished to meet the moving spirit of its community, Mayor Wu. I had introductions to him from London, and the Chinese Secretariat at the Municipal Buildings arranged an opportunity for me to present them. The civic relations between the Settlement and Greater Shanghai are admirable, the inevitable overlapping and interlocking of authority is adjusted with the least possible friction and misunderstanding—Secretary Fessenden and Mayor Wu are on the best of terms.

It always takes time to approach a dignitary in China, but the Mayor waived custom in my favour and we saw him that same afternoon. His headquarters lay beyond the Chinese city. We longed to explore its age-old streets and labyrinthine alleys and decided to walk.

And here we came up against the concrete expression of the fear that underlies the Settlement's hostility to the Chinese. Over a delightful lunch at the French club with an English woman and her friends we happened to mention that we thought of going to the city. I shall never forget the apprehension of our hostess.

“ Not alone? You daren't do it. You must take a man with you. It isn't really safe without.”

Dark, deliciously creepy stories followed of those who had ventured unprotected and never returned. Gruesome

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legends of victims found doped and dazed in some wretched hovel; all the scares with which industrious serialists have popularized Chinatown were unearthed for our warning. We listened, were impressed—and disobeyed.

Later we went under male escort, but the initial experience we enjoyed by ourselves. The city is no longer walled, you enter on foot without challenge, though a car needs a special Chinese licence. The road, converging on the Settlement, fairly wide at first gradually narrows into a maze of streets, ancient as time, encrusted with dirt, with here and there a gaily painted shop-front, banners of red and gold and black and white in the lovely Chinese script. Children swarmed under our feet, beggars asked for *cumsha*—a generic word which signifies alms and sets the seal on a commercial transaction—or exhibited their palsied limbs in silence. An ineffably aged man, paralysed from the waist downwards, rolled from one side of the path to the other, propelling himself by motions of the head, pausing midway for monetary recognition. It was a dreadful yet an heroic sight. At least in spite of all his sufferings he retained his right of will, if but to roll and beg! Endless streams of humanity poured from the depths of a shattery-dan building, the noise, the clatter rose to the sky.

A turn in the street and we were transported thousands of years back into the heart of an ancient Chinese print. We found ourselves in a market lined with stalls, junk, Chinese food, fine embroideries, ivories and carvings surrounded by the immemorial figures of tradition. A letter-writer sat at his table with slender brushes and Indian ink ready to pen a marriage-contract, a business document, or a love-lorn wail. A fortune-teller read the future by cards or in a crystal ball, a merchant spread his wares on the pavement, brasses, porcelain, bamboo toys and trifles of jewellery, and always, though the beggars pressed, the children swarmed, and the women pointed to our clothes,

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we passed free and unmolested. There is an amazing presence about the Chinese mother—*Ma* is the actual translation—and the smallest coolie woman has an authority that the largest man does not resist. She rules the roost as indubitably as her English sister of the working class, and it is only necessary to ask her protection by a glance of the eye to ensure true Chinese courtesy from all around. So while we were hemmed in by sightseers—after all, they had as much right to stare at us as we at them—we were not incommoded.

And then suddenly, as so often happens in a Chinese street, the people scattered, making a silent space. There broke upon our view a childhood's legend come actually to life, the tea-house of the willow pattern in its identical lake. Who in their nursery days has not followed the fortunes of the runaway lovers crossing from bridge to bridge over the water that lay between them and security, tracing their progress on a cup and saucer or a plate?

It was mid-afternoon, the sun in its mildest mood had turned the water to gold and touched the faded roofs to a magic rose. The little bridges suddenly seemed peopled with figures of a bygone time—mandarins wearing coats embroidered with golden dragons of the Imperial five claws; little ladies swaying on bound feet and glittering with jewelled head-dresses.

Fascinating, ridiculous bridges, they are built zigzag as a precaution against devils. The Chinese variety, being very stupid, are able only to walk in a straight line, so the bridges set up before palaces, pagodas, and all places of importance are designed to confuse and defeat them. It was at the tea-house that we saw for the first time a further expedient against devilish trickery, which up-country is quite general. A child of about six was wearing a fantastic costume irresistibly suggestive of Nellie Wallace. Short full skirt and blouse were surmounted by a ridiculous little hat with a coloured bobble like a cherry perched on the extreme top of the head. The small person, quite

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obviously male, to obfuscate the evil spirits was dressed female! The masculine soul is the objective of all devils. The feminine is of too small account to trouble over. Hence the camouflage that in some cases consists merely of the silver bracelet or finger-ring which afford security to a completely naked man-child. Between seven and eight the boy sheds disguise and fights the demons *in propria persona*.

The Willow Tea-house does a flourishing business these days, and lovers still linger gazing at the water. But the dimensions of the lake, its pictorial silver sheen, has lessened to a muddy pool transfused to momentary brightness at sunset. Here, at this hour come bird-fanciers with their caged pets, golden orioles of the canary family, who when they see the shimmering depths rejoice and shake the spaces of the dying day with song. It is the Chinese method of training their pets to vocal excellence, and it seems to answer very well. Here also come crowds of young girls from home or factory, some in traditional short tight black trousers and white coat, others in the modern national dress, both in embroidered slippers and with sleek smooth hair.

Bound feet in the cities these days are only found among elderly women. They totter along, poor things, their crushed bones and bruised flesh held together by bandages, wearing acutely pointed shoes. The younger generation of the towns walk free and unconfined, but, although the Republic of 1911 declared the practice illegal, girl-children in the villages still suffer the traditional treatment which begins about six years of age. A daughter of the countryside with normal feet could only hope to marry a low-class fellow, so partly to gratify male vanity and also to maintain the prestige of wifely fidelity—"no walkee, no run away"—the rural maiden is condemned to hobble.

A turn round the corner and old Cathay had vanished, giving place to internationalism in its cheapest and most distressing form. In place of the lovely traditional

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octagonal bowls, white outside, painted in flowers and dragons with a heavenly turquoise lining, were stacks of the cheapest china, quite obviously the products of Berlin and Birmingham. Hideous plush chairs and repellent sofas swamped with European bad taste were proudly flaunted—ornaments of crude blue glass, unforgivable pink, defamed the soft-toned embroideries on a neighbouring stall. Unhappily the atrocities seemed very popular. As we watched, a complete truck-load of the worst examples of mass production were unpacked—and purchased. The younger people have acquired a taste for Western fashion engendered by the cinemas, and having no standard by which to judge—Chinese art does not admit spurious comparison—accept the cheap and nasty as admissible examples.

A jolly little woman holding a camouflaged child caught Bunny's eye.

"What a pretty little girl!" said my friend, knowing what she ought to say. It was, however, too much for *Ma* to let the foreign missy think she had not borne a son, and turning up the ridiculous skirt revealed her offspring's badge of masculinity with pardonable pride. The child smiled, and Bunny gurgled.

Right in the middle of what might be called Brummagem Fair, within eye distance of its little sister the tea-house, rose the ruins of a mandarin's palace, with long sloping roofs whose lines were an ecstasy of satisfaction to behold. The wall was cunningly wrought with a marvelous device and a dragon crept along its length, so real that it seemed almost to move. We found the entrance with difficulty; there, however, we encountered some friends, an Englishman who has lived long in Shanghai and with him a Chinese student. We joined forces and entered into a sheer enchantment. The courtyards with their verandahs, that shaded the rooms where the Honourable Presence used to take his ease with wives and concubines, were woefully sparse of paint; the Imperial red,

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deep, soft, luscious beyond expression, had worn thin, but the glamour of the gardens still remained. Here in a pavilion had sat the pretty creatures who waited on my lord, playing stringed instruments, chirping love-songs, eating *li-chee* (the Chinese strawberry), water-melon, supping *samsu*.

To this great chamber graciously roofed, through which to-day the winds of heaven blow, merchants had brought their wares ; fairy silks had slithered over the tables, precious stones cascaded in a favourite's lap, cunningly carved lapis lazuli, beaten rings of filigree, ornaments of kingfisher feather, blue beyond compare, had vied with silver lotus blossoms, cunningly contrived amulets, exquisitely wrought chains.

We sat and watched the trees, leafy and verdant, banked up with iris and here and there a creamy-petalled magnolia.

“ The mandarin who lived in this palace,” said the student, “ was beloved by all his people. Legend has it that he was converted by the Jesuits in his old age and became a Christian. That was hundreds of years ago, but his memory is still green. The Catholic Mission a short way beyond the city is called Siccawei after him, and his house remains as a memorial to his name.”

The guardian of the place, so frail and wraithlike that he might have been a ghostly survivor from mandarin days, was thanked by the student and duly endowed, and together we all passed from the gracious past to the present bustling day.

It was a swift transition to the offices of Mayor Wu. A modern building in Western style, it stands in a pleasant garden through which we were escorted up a steep flight of steps into a plain deal-furnished waiting-room, screened off by those queer truncated doors common throughout the East, which while securing privacy admit a continual current of fresh air. Here we were brought tea served not in bowls but in glasses. We had barely time to taste it

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when a messenger arrived to take us to a higher floor, where we made another pause and were given fresh tea. The whole atmosphere hummed with activity. Clerks in silk or linen robes typed letters in English or French, others with magic swiftness transcribed in Chinese script, filed documents, sought out facts—it was all as slick and as orderly as an American bureau. An English office by comparison seemed almost slow!

Finally we reached the top storey and a very charming room with wicker chairs and Chinese carpets. Here we were served with tea in the covered porcelain bowls that date back to the first flowers of Chinese elegance. It is etiquette not to remove the covers as you sip—no well-bred person drinks the tea—but to manipulate them decorously with one finger. Ceremony requires that your host or hostess whether social or official should dally with the refreshment during your visit. When they raise the bowl to their lips it is the signal for you to go, the audience is ended. This custom, a very pretty one, is a nice social *nuance* which I feel might be grafted on our national code.

A secretary speaking excellent English announced the arrival of His Worship. The English of the educated Chinese is extraordinarily good, not only in pronunciation but in rhythm. Their quick ear seems to have caught the stress and shape of our speech; not even the Russians excel them.

Mayor Wu in a lounge suit and a humorous smile conversed easily. Tall, finely built, with well-groomed hands and hair and a charming tie, in spite of Western externals he is indisputably China. Not the China of leisured art and traditional culture, but the product of to-day with its swift transport, keen business, the scrapping of old ways for new—urgency, expediency propelled by a strong will. Modern methods of organization—factory inspection, unemployment registration—were all in process of evolution when the Japanese hostilities broke out and pushed everything aside. At the moment the reconstruction of the devastated areas was the chief consideration. The Mayor

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told us of his plans for the rebuilding of Chapei—where thousands of families, all of them non-combatants, had been rendered homeless by Japanese shells and sheer wanton destruction. He pointed to the plans hanging on the walls, meticulous blue prints made to scale showing where wide new roads would replace narrow streets, upspringing tenements the huddled slums.

“But it needs money, much money,” said the Mayor, “more than we can hope to raise this year. There are so many to help, thousands of little children and poor women, men who have lost their all. But”—the characteristic Chinese trait of turning the poorest material to sound use showed itself—“we are beginning already. We are using the *débris* of the houses to rebuild.”

Before we left he arranged that his *attaché*, Colonel Paul Lee—anglicized from Li—should take us the next morning to what was left of Woosung, the village and the forts, with Chapei and the rest of the devastated areas.

We had dinner that night at the Metropole. Soft-footed Chinese served French dishes, which for all their excellent *cuisine* seem to grow tasteless on the palate. It is the penalty of climate and sanitation, or the lack of it. Vegetables must be boiled prodigiously to eradicate germs, and fish seems restricted to mandarin, a rather flabby plaice-like creature boiled, fried, or *sauté*, while poultry is lean and such mutton as there be unrecognizable. Fruit is not plentiful and must be eaten with discretion. Cucumbers, pineapples, and all earth-rooted produce are suspect. Eggs, however, small, brown, and succulent, are a great joy; ice-creams are perfect and strawberries are sent by air from Batavia!

In spite of the absence of cockroaches I was beginning to suspect our hotel of being more than a little dull. British were the lunchers and the diners; the fascinating Chinese who rented rooms merely flitted past us in the lift or on the staircase. But the Cathay, the Palace, and Astor House were just the same, and British supremacy would not



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permit removal to a national establishment. I was, however, to experience a real Chinese gathering next day.

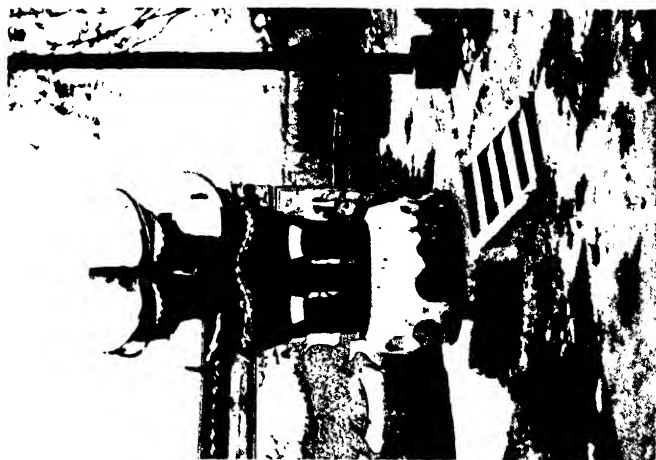
We were called for quite early—Shanghai gets up at an unearthly hour—by Colonel Lee. In a high-speed car we raced along beyond the Settlement to the forts on the Whangpoo river where it flows into the Yangtsze. A flat landscape—the town trickles on and on for over twenty miles when fields begin and burgeoning trees and farm-houses with ducks and chickens and all the pleasant sights and sounds of the countryside. Colonel Lee, a very modern young man in pale grey, Shanghai's inevitable wear, with fawn and biscuit colour for variety, spoke fluent American. He had been educated in the States and all his ideas were orientated in the direction of the great republic. He had not spent much time in China since his boyhood, except for military service. His headquarters were at Shanghai with flying visits to Nanking and an occasional journey to Peking. A very charming person with a good knowledge of American literature, he and I found many things to discuss, but as we approached what is left of the old forts he suddenly changed; behind the Western manner we felt the resurgence of his native land.

“Look!” he said eloquently. Under a serene blue sky lay the shattered ruins of small villages, little houses where simple people had been born and bred and hoped in peace to die until Japan annihilated them.

There is always something spiritually hurtful in a place where homes have been destroyed by war. From a heap of rubble a broken chair protrudes, a child's toy, some humble domestic thing that, shattered hopelessly, can serve no more.

Against the skyline the remnant of a chimney-shaft gave a British note of defiance.

“That is the Woosung Hotel,” said the Colonel. “It was owned by an English naval captain. He built it and managed it himself and it was very popular at week-ends, a jolly place with good boating and swimming. Every-



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"A BRITISH NOTE OF DEFIANCE"

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LO WEN-KAN  
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body liked the Captain and when the Japs opened fire begged him to go into the Settlement. But he would not budge. He is an old man, but nothing would shift him. He used to shake his fist and declare he would not go for any blank Japs. They shot his hotel all to bits, but still he stayed, until at last a company of Chinese volunteers came along and kidnapped him into safety.”

I liked to think of that fine old sportsman defying an entire attacking force, but his gallantry availed him nothing; with the desolate farmsteads and the villages only a few unhappy stones of the hotel remain.

The fort guns, obsolete at any time, presented a queer appearance. One, indeed, had been bombed to smithereens, but the others were intact except for their muzzles, which had been sawn off! The bombardment by land and sea had apparently failed to find the range and the old crocks had been attended to by a landing-party.

“It is not so much that Japan is efficient,” as an English soldier of considerable experience remarked to me, “but that up to the present she’s only had to contend with the untrained. Russia was effete when she tackled Japan and China is without effective artillery or air force.”

We wandered along the shore, past the trenches still piled with sandbags where the Nineteenth Army had held up the advance, through scenes of desolation which brought back to me those awful years in France. Driven from shelter to shelter, swept by a tempest of steel, the people had crawled into every hole, nook, and cranny as they made towards Shanghai. The one thing unscathed was a little wayside shrine that by a miracle the shells had left untouched.

But it was when we neared Chapei and the districts immediately adjoining that the full ghastliness of what had happened crashed in on me. Here a school lay in ruins, a little farther on a hospital had been demolished, shops and dwelling-houses splintered to atoms. This had been a peaceful, well-ordered community, hard-working and

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hard-living, and relentlessly, remorselessly, it had been wiped out!

We found Chapei nothing but a rubbish-heap. The streets, piled with broken stones and bricks and battered bits, were haunted by unhappy souls hunting with desperate fingers for some remnant of their homes among the *débris*. Fifty thousand families had been scattered to the winds, but some few desolate creatures could not tear themselves away. A woman raking over a blackened heap straightened herself as we passed. She had lived here, she explained, she and her husband and the children. They had all gone—home, husband, and children too. There was nothing, nothing left.

A huge ruin like a great wound marked the site of the National Library and Printing Press, set wantonly on fire. Thousands of books were destroyed, rare manuscripts that can never be replaced. Apart from Belgium the modern world cannot have seen such tragedy.

I thought of the young man at the dinner-party, the passengers aboard the *Menelaus* and their cry for the big guns, and I wished that they could see this holocaust that it might scald their eyes and tear their hearts as it did mine.

Our guide made no appeal for pity. He showed us round with an unmoved precision that commanded respect.

"They had very little, those poor people who lived here," he said quietly, "and what they had was taken from them."

China has a pathetic faith in the League of Nations that nothing seems to shatter. Hopelessly let down in the first phase of Japanese aggression, she still trusts that Geneva will stem the invasion. I never realized our national capacity for self-deception to the full until I went to China and witnessed for myself the fruits of Japanese imperialism. At the moment that we stood among the ashes of Chapei the British newspapers were full of the work for peace the League had accomplished!

## “BLEEDING WAR”

On the site of what had been the railway-station public mourning for the killed and wounded was displayed. Long white streamers printed in black bore the names and deeds of the dead. Thousands of fluttering ribands beautiful with the curving Chinese characters floated from every house. It was as though a veil of delicately patterned mourning had draped their grief. You find these paper streamers in every temple. They are the records of the people later to be transferred to the ancestral tablets which form a part of every home.

“It is time for lunch,” said the Colonel, and asked us to his club. Built in Western style, its decoration and appointments remained national. Chinese women, wives and daughters of the members, ate in a room apart, and on every table there were chopsticks as well as knives and forks. We had roast sucking-pig, tender and delicate as spring chicken, bamboo shoots, shrimps, and ducks’ liver, flavoured with soya-bean sauce. I got on quite comfortably with my chopsticks and enjoyed the food prodigiously. The Chinese have a genius for cooking and despite the climate and other deterrents—to the Western mind—preserve the individual flavour of each national dish.

We drank beer with our chow, a modern institution, with green tea to follow. The room pleasantly panelled was full of Chinese business and professional men all in lounge suits. They talked English, American, and their own tongue. Most of them, the Colonel told us, had been educated in Europe or the States. Others had studied at the National Universities, where English, French, and German are all taught. In the old days cultured Chinese invariably sent their sons to Oxford and Cambridge, but now that times are lean the cost is too heavy, and the majority go to the States—not, for the most part, to Harvard, Yale, Princeton, or similar homes of learning, but to those institutions where mere attendance qualifies for a degree.

In most Chinese cities girl students attend the same

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classes as young men, but even in Shanghai, with its Western reactions, the proportion of women graduates who go in for business or adopt a career is very small. The Chinese theatre still rejects the woman artist, but on the screen she has come into her own. Colonel Lee told us of a national venture in Shanghai, the Star Motion Picture Co. After lunch he took us to the studio.

It was curiously like Elstree in miniature. The same detached groups of extras moodily kicked their heels; minor stars sat in their dressing-rooms waiting for the management to send for them; major planets grew temperamental, and leading ladies inquired if the casting director knew who he was speaking to! The producer, who had been at Hollywood, had a complete American accent and a very charming manner. All the newest lighting gadgets were installed, and screen slang gave pep to sedate Chinese. Some of the girls were very lovely: "Butterfly" Wu, the idol of the fans, is an exquisite creature who registers an entire gamut of emotion without an ugly line or awkward angle. She leaves Anna May Wong far behind in looks—to my mind, at any rate—and if and when she learns to speak English should be as famous in the Western world as in the East.

Technically the Chinese films are extraordinarily good. The photography is admirable and the grouping effective. The stories are still over-Westernized, but the comedy is natural and the love-scenes marked by a deliberate restraint which is most effective. With a wealth of scenery and pictorial effect at their command, and all the delicious legends of national literature to draw upon, it should not be long before the Star studio, representatively Chinese, becomes a recognized factor in the cinema world.

We went that evening with Peter to a market so rooted in tradition that films and suchlike evidences of to-day seemed to recede into another age. On the confines of the Chinese city within ten minutes of the Metropole we might have dived into China under the Sung Emperors.

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The market is housed in a building, rows of stalls set out treasures and trivialities one on the other as is the national custom. Old men with long moustaches and bald heads polished and shining stood impassive in their long robes watching the chattering crowd with far-off eyes. But let an inquiring hand stray too closely to an article and the eyes suddenly lit, the old face grew formidable. Jade necklaces, jade Buddhas, bracelets of one piece, shading from the colour of a summer sea through blood-red to white, a cunningly fashioned phoenix in a curious yellow, a plaque of milky pink, rings of deep olive, marvellously carved and quite opaque—all the diversities of the precious stone displayed in a shimmering welter.

It was later that I learnt how the finest specimens of jade may be distinguished. I thought value like beauty was determined by the depth of colouring. It lies, however, in the clearness and the texture of the piece. An ancient emperor—impossible to believe he was of common clay—in an old, old shop asked me which of two pieces was the better. I plumped for a delicious lump of shining green. The other of less definite shade, though clear as light, did not appeal to me.

The emperor smiled benevolently and pointed to my choice.

“Him no good. Other fella better, velly velly better.”

He told me to stroke them both with a fingertip, and I realized that the texture of the second, even to my untutored touch, was infinitely finer in grain, inexpressively softer and smoother. Therein lay its value—priced accordingly.

From jade we turned to rose quartz—elephants, Buddhas, wonderfully carved pigmy men and fabulous beasts, whose roseate glow faded to clear transparency as we gazed deeper. Embroideries—temple hangings, Manchu coats stiff with gold, rare specimens of Peking stitch in scarlet, white, or palest blue; teapots of every imaginable shape—I met a man in Hankow who had collected a



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hundred and two varieties ; tea bowls, fragile as an egg-shell and those of common clay ; Chinese lions in turquoise blue, by master-potters, side by side with the crude factory output of to-day.

Then there were bamboo carvings, a coolie with a fan new-sprung from the artist, the Goddess of Mercy slender and appealing, a marvellous old fisherman polished to a deep brown, with a jolly laughing face and a waggish beard and a cloak of matting on his shoulders so real that one expected to feel the rain. He held his catch of fish aloft, and I wanted to say how glad I was he'd had good sport.

Peter engaged in conversation with his owner ; I watched the bargain business with delight—the tall fair-haired Irishman with his bedevilling smile, and the quiet watchful son of the Orient, grave-eyed and serene.

“ A poor thing, but I'll give you five dollars,” Peter started off. The carving was obviously worth very much more, but the man was not at all put out.

“ No can do.” He shook his head. “ Thirty.”

That, Peter exclaimed, was an extortion, and went up to six.

And so the balance swayed, one coming down, the other going up, until in perfect good humour a price within the region of the amount each had interiorly determined was agreed. They both enjoyed the contest ; but it took a long while. I began to understand what an enormous overdraft of time is needed in the East.

Upstairs were wonderful red lacquer cabinets, tables, and chairs. Bunny fell for the chairs. It broke her heart to learn that in all their elegance of form and decoration they could be bought for two-and-sixpence each.

“ They'd look wonderful in Fleet Street,” she said ecstatically.

“ And how are you going to pack them and cart them about? ” I suggested. “ There'll be nothing left of them by the time we get home.”

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We had to leave the chairs and many other treasures where we found them. Modern transport may be quick, but it is not roomy. I looked back with longing on the spacious days of Marco Polo, when camel-trains ambled behind you with your chattels, and sailing-ships transported you and all your goods across the world for a mere song!

But though we had to say farewell to much we took with us our heart's desire—appealing beauty, tender stateliness incarnate. We spied her behind glass doors with her sister, only less perfect than herself. A lady of ivory, grained like gossamer, smooth as cream, and mellow with time, she stood eight inches high, poised on a tiny stand. She wore long, gracious robes, with sleeves from which her hands stole out as lilies from a sheath; the girdle, like the embroidery on her garments, was tinted a faint red, while delicate black lines diapered the borders. She carried a basket on her arm full of tiny blossoms, and her hair, of a soft brown, was piled high from an exquisitely moulded forehead. Her fine dark brows were arched; under a straight nose a small red bow-shaped mouth smiled with a soft serenity—untouchable, illimitable. She had known everything, suffered all things and won through to an abiding peace. The figure, curving slightly, followed the lines of the elephant tusk from which she sprang, at the same time suggesting the willow wand whose swaying grace the Chinese artist loves to capture.

There was something in the face reminiscent of the Italian primitives, elusive, haunting, yet eternally human.

We stood and looked at her, wondering what tragic fate had forced a fortunate possessor to resign her. The sister, as slim and elegant, was more robust in spirit. Her robe, heavily ornamented, stressed pride of possession; the other had a kingdom not of this earth.

She was a work of genius and her price beyond our purse. We had but begun our journey and who should say what calls might come on a diminishing letter of credit?

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Sadly but firmly we moved on. But Peter stayed behind. Before we realized what he was doing he had embarked—in fluent Chinese—upon negotiations. He would not be gainsaid. With true Irish imperialism he trod us little Englanders under foot, and left the market carrying the figure, and I feel sure mortgaged for years to come. She was his gift to us, symbol of the abiding beauty, the immeasurable endurance of the East, into whose knowledge he had already entered.

She came with us on our travels and whether we journeyed rough or smooth remained her immovable self! And now, generations from her ancestors, half the world from her native home, she stands elegant, aloof, yet intimately human on the mantelshelf.

## CHAPTER VII

### CLANS, GUILDS—AND ‘SQUEEZE’

THE wealth of the Settlement, though decreased through the slump, is still sufficiently fabulous to make the contrast between the men who amass money and those who make it for them cruelly sharp. Dispossession in England is more effectively draped. In Shanghai Lazarus earning at the maximum a dollar (1*s.* 3*d.*) for a twelve-hour day in cotton, printing, glass or tobacco factories, ship or house building, transport or brick-making, appears in all the leanness of his exploited state. The fact that the Chinese are frugal beyond our knowledge of the word, the hardest liver and the cheapest eaters, makes it possible for Midas to keep down wages to a bare subsistence level. Sporadic strikes of mill hands, tram men, etc., occasionally force up the rates a few cents, but for the most part the dead level—twice as much as before the War, I was informed—persists, and in order to feed, house, and clothe the family, women and children have to become wage-slaves with the men.

Trade unionism in the Western sense hardly exists. The general strike declared in Shanghai in 1925 was purely a political demonstration. The factor of the family extending to the clan makes effective economic organization very difficult.

The clan, a corporate unit—all for each and each for all—includes the richest and the poorest members; employer and employee, springing from a common root, may sometimes share the same name, so that the division of economic interests is rarely pushed to extremity. It is

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impossible to engage on a continuous struggle against members of your own clan or to join with those of another with which you are at variance. All sorts of considerations in this life and the next are involved. Western capitalism is on a different footing, but here the lack of centralized co-ordination prevents effective combination. The Chinese have yet to realize the advantage of collective bargaining.

In the Shanghai cotton-mills and the factories you find the family system in full swing. Tiny children who at five or six years old start work, come with mother and father, while those who are still too young to make profit contemplate the universe and play about till chow-time brings the household feed. Some of the more modern buildings, under British, Chinese, or Japanese control, are well sanitated and lit, with adequate water supplies and rooms where the operatives and their families may eat, instead of consuming their rice in the shops. But, despite the heartache which the spectacle of tiny tots harnessed to labour invariably stirs, the fact remains that the children and their mothers are not divided.

The Eastern custom of household employment contrasts quite favourably with that segregation of little children which marked the first beginnings of our great industrial era.

There are, however, other aspects of Chinese labour in which the family factor, still recognized, is shifted to a different angle. Small businesses are run entirely on child labour in conditions quite alien to Western ideas. The exquisite embroideries which make Shanghai *lingerie* a sartorial joy are stitched by the tiny fingers of small boys, who sit for more hours than one cares to think about, evolving delicate tracteries and intricate patterns on silk and satin garments. The little creatures are apprenticed from five years of age, and, quick to learn, soon add grist to the mill. Their masters feed and lodge them often very poorly, but the hours of labour and the general level of

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living is shared by the individual employer, who, though he has absolute authority over their lives, generally remembers that the law of the clan, the customs of the guild, must be respected.

The guild is fundamentally identical with our own institution of the Middle Ages. The apprentice becomes a craftsman, evolves as journeyman, and eventually starts as a master. But modernism is impinging on the guild, and, though it still flourishes in the interior as in the North, the mass employment of the international cities, except in personal crafts, tends to displace it.

Local customs, that curious district patriotism interwoven with the system of the clans, modify labour all over China. There are radical differences between the workers of Nanking and Hankow and other Yangtze ports, while Peking again has an individual outlook; but broadly and generally, corporate action has not become a part of the Chinese proletariat, though there are amazing instances of swift if transitory protest against intolerable conditions.

As yet, however, nothing has shifted the economic parasite of 'squeeze' which feeds on every commercial and social transaction, through such fine transitions that no one can trace its final intricacy.

Thus a stoker aboard ship, a clerk in an office, a business man who secures a contract, all have to pay backsheesh to Number One, who has to fork out to the *compradore* above him, and he in his turn remits to someone else, until the ramifications of the system reach out to grades and spheres utterly remote from first beginnings.

We had an interesting example in our dealings with a little Chinese tailor at the Metropole. The heat had played havoc with our wardrobes. Celanese dresses I found wore admirably and washed to perfection, withstanding the ravages of diverse climates and many laundries and always emerging fresh and intact, but British *crêpe de Chine* split into atoms under the tropical sun and utterly disintegrated in the water. We therefore purchased

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native silk of an exquisite quality at a ridiculously cheap rate.

The shop we visited was a dream from the *Arabian Nights*. Never have I seen such sheen of texture and fineness of web. A sea of silk tempered by brocade and *crêpe*-like fabrics, we bought some dress lengths for a few shillings each and on the specific recommendation of our Number One arranged for a costumier to visit us. Your room-boy at an hotel must be regarded in the light of friend and counsellor if you are to make the best of life. Automatically he will usher in predatory hordes of would-be tradesmen, but appeal to him as guide and philosopher and he will see to it that you are served cheaply and with despatch.

Mr Hee Kung was one of the few really fat Chinese that I met. His face was moonlike, his girth prodigious; only the folds of his gown prevented a display of obesity. He measured and cut with neatness, but his pidgin English was less fluent.

"Me come again," said he.

"You come to-morrow," we answered.

"One hour, two hour, three hour—all the same come," he suggested.

We had to make him realize that we should not be in.

"Missy walkee," said Bunny suiting the action.

He wrinkled his ponderous forehead and visibly suffered in his efforts to show us why he must return that afternoon.

"Me cuttee, cuttee, Missy look see," he pleaded earnestly.

Again he indicated the passage of time. The poor man almost wept until, with a last effort, he pointed to the floor.

"Office," he said earnestly, "*cumsha*—all the same pay."

We gathered at last that the unfortunate man had already been charged toll for entry, and that if he could not settle the fitting that afternoon he would have to pay

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all over again. On top of that would be Number One's commission and perhaps a special *douceur* to Number Two!

He was a most efficient tailor and turned out his work with a Bond Street finish, and topside embroidery—executed, I suppose, by the male infants installed under his counter.

The standard of living among the Chinese workers cannot, however, be compared with British ideals. The postulate of the garden city, a house for every family with individual sleeping and living accommodation, is not in line with their desires. Social and psychological reasons have created an intensive domestic culture in which two or three generations coalesce with as many different household groups. This instinct to crowd in upon each other derives from two ancient and integral dreads—bandits and devils. The closer the humanity the more chance of resistance. It is more difficult to distinguish individuals in a serried mass than widely scattered, and bandits have been defeated and devils deceived of their prey by a multiplicity of persons. This custom, indigenous to every village, has been brought into the towns.

I have, however, found as dense an overcrowding per cubic foot of air in the backlands of Glasgow, those unutterable tenements sandwiched in such close proximity that the daylight is permanently shut out, and rats swim in foul sinks and loathly drains. In shortage of water also and general sanitation the Chinese city of Shanghai in some degree is paralleled by Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where in certain districts an entire tenement swarming with humanity is served by a single tap in a courtyard and one outside lavatory, while a community of a thousand souls within fifteen minutes of the city has neither modern water nor lavatory accommodation, Mother Earth supplying both *en plein*!

To those who know nothing of their own native slums Chinese conditions in the poorer city districts may appear unspeakable. I admit that frequently the coffin of an aged



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relation is supported outside the window waiting for a propitious burial, which makes the atmosphere a little nifty, and that, in spite of modern municipal hospitals, dislike of separation will unite a household in measles, cholera, or smallpox, as the case may be, but, these peculiarities excepted, I saw nothing of filth or degradation which I have not met in varying degrees in our national British towns.

Chinese women, like their men, have a flair for laundering, and most evenings there is a household wash-up. As for personal cleanliness the climate induces such profuse perspiration that for the greater part of the year bodies are cleansed, if in no other way, by their own sweat, so that individual dirt is hard to accumulate.

But to me, of all those who live hard and rest little the most forlorn and the most oppressed are the ricksha-coolies of Shanghai, the worst fed, the poorest clad of any of the fraternity I encountered up the Yangtze or in the North. Tattered, coughing, dragging complacent human loads through blinding heat or stinging cold, they are blackmailed by the police, International and Chinese, badgered by the motor drivers, and all too often abused and underpaid by their Western fares. I have seen the minimum thirty cents per journey tendered for a ride of twenty minutes half across the Settlement, the only answer to protestations being contemptuous abuse or a kick.

Conditions in Shanghai—from any point—are not reassuring. The blank refusal of the British to recognize the Chinese point of view, the fear of the one, the resentment of the other, at any moment may flame into open expression. Nor does it seem to me that our official attitude is conducive to a better understanding. Some of those in authority struck me as belatedly Victorian in outlook. I received the kindest hospitality on all sides, but apart from personal impressions I retain a vivid memory of an official utterance which in relation to China struck me

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as curiously crude as well as out of date: "Overpopulation, that's what the world is suffering from. Too many to feed and not enough food to give them."

Mechanically I cited the tons of wheat burnt by the million in Canada, the coffee destroyed in Brazil, the fruit left rotting in England; but the allusion passed by. The official mind had never heard of defective distribution, in spite of all the conferences on currency.

"When Nature remedies the overplus of humanity by flood and famine," said the voice of authority, "it seems to me illogical to interfere."

I listened and wondered why a knowledge of modern economics is not compulsory for foreign service. It would at least save our representatives from expounding the discounted philosophy of Malthus.

But beyond Shanghai up the Yangtsze and in the North the British attitude is different. Astonishingly dominant and pervasive, our influence has to the Chinese become a part of the general structure. I had an insight into what an Anglo-Chinese *entente* can accomplish from an interview with Sir John Hope Simpson, C.I.E.

It was following the greatest flood in human history that the Nationalist Government—Kuomintang—invited Sir John to assist in the gigantic work of reconstruction, with the feeding of the famine-stricken areas, and their million refugees. The Yangtsze and the Hwai, those vast waterways of China, rising above their confines, had ruined the crops and levelled the homesteads in ninety counties.

The Yangtsze, most beautiful and terrible of rivers, decides the life or death of millions of human beings every year. If the water rises above a certain point, the rice is drowned, if it falls below, the rice is parched; only when the gods are propitious and keep the fructifying stream at subsistence level is existence assured.

The dykes in 1931 were swamped, whole districts lay under water, while populations trekked for miles seeking shelter and food.

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The man who saved the situation told me the story in a small office in a busy street. His quiet, pleasant voice seemed to create a pool of stillness against which the clatter of lorries, carts and Chinese cries broke in vain. His face instinct with patience, humour and power of decision held my imagination. I understood just how he had captured Chinese confidence, assuaging by sheer personality the curious internecine disunions which are the curse of the national political life, uniting the most divergent parties in the effort to defeat the flood.

The farm population affected, he told me, was equivalent approximately to the entire farm population of the United States, while 45 per cent. of all farm buildings in the flooded area were destroyed, and 40 per cent. of all persons had to migrate to higher land. The Commission established refugee camps and food distribution centres, and vast schemes were set afoot for rebuilding wider, better, and higher dykes. Local labour was recruited from the refugees, who like the rest were paid in wheat or flour. Subscriptions came from all over the world. The United States sent money and arranged a wheat loan; the overseas Chinese raised seven hundred thousand Mexican dollars, and Chinese nationals four and a half million. Gradually the starving were fed, the homeless housed; but to my mind the most stupendous achievement was the erection of three thousand miles of dykes on the Yangtze, Han, and Hwai rivers within the first six months of 1932.

"It was only by the loyalty, devotion, and skill of the Chinese engineers that the thing was accomplished," said Sir John. "Before we could start operations in any particular area supplies of wheat had to be arranged, and difficulties of transport in many cases were almost insuperable. In some districts the roads are mere tracks only possible for baggage coolies, who had to carry the wheat for miles. Added to this, in the Communist provinces of the Yangtze the engineering staff was frequently captured and held to ransom till the wheat arrived. They were

usually quite equal to the occasion, however, and succeeded in roping in the Reds for work. The Commission, entirely non-political, did not care in the least who built the dykes so long as they were constructed."

I know something of the labour necessary to the gigantic task. With no machinery available every inch of the length and breadth and thickness of the great dykes, built of earth firmly compressed, had to be wrought by hand. Every sack of soil was carried on the shoulders of a coolie and beaten into place by the impact of a huge stone which, holed in the middle, is attached to ropes manipulated by a squad of men. The process is known as tamping and to the rhythm of a chant the stone is swung high in the air and brought down with a resounding thwack. Over and over again, rising and falling in interminable sequence—the brain swims at the unending spectacle of human endurance, pluck, and skill.

"And now," Sir John went on, "the rivers are embanked to a height beyond any point to which the floods have risen. Arrangements have been made to keep the dykes in repair, each area has its flood engineer, and unless some unprecedented calamity happens it is unlikely the tragedy of 1931 will be repeated."

The salvage work was carried through by West and East alike. Every profession, each sect, helped to the uttermost. Catholic and Methodist, Anglican, Baptist, and Buddhist joined in the administration of the camps. The impression left on the people has been one of friendship, disinterested and sincere.

To me it was a very memorable meeting. I felt that those great traditions which suddenly, startlingly reflower in the rare spirits who now and again redeem our race were rooted in Sir John. I never met a man who inspired a greater faith and confidence.

The beginnings of my ultimate impressions on China's foreign relations date back to Shanghai. There I first came into contact with Japanese officialdom. We had

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been invited to lunch by the Consul-General and his very pretty wife. The Consulate lies in the vicinity of Chapei, but in spite of the demolition of the district the house was protected by barbed wire and armed sentries. We were received by our hostess in the authentic *kimono* which later was to become familiar in its slightest detail. It was a terribly oppressive day, and she must have found her heavy *obi* or sash very trying, but she retained her delicious coolness of demeanour and gave us sweetmeats and cigarettes till lunch was served.

I had hoped it would be *à la japonaise*, but the *menu* was completely Western, as was the room, except for its wonderful bronzes and beautiful prints. We skirted round the Sino-Japanese affairs, which our host duly deplored. He explained, however, that his nationals had been in danger and reminded us of the bombing of a Japanese official after the peace. The fact that the would-be assassin was a Korean and not a Chinese did not affect the question. He seemed jumpy, and we could not forget the barbed wire even on the gracious expanse of green lawn, which included a tennis-court and a croquet-ground. I noticed that whereas Colonel Lee and other Chinese officials kept off the subject on social occasions, our little Jap consul hammered at it all the time. He was so insistent to convince me that Japan acted in self-defence that I grew tired of his arguments. Psychology, as I realized later, is not a strong point of the Japanese. They seem unable to size up individual temperament, and serve out the same fare to the most divergent people. The Chinese, on the contrary, have the gift of seeing relations. They estimate your mentality, allow for your reactions, and establish an easy contact which the Japanese cannot contrive.

It was, we felt, time we moved on. We had decided to make Nanking our next stopping-place, where Mayor Wu had given us introductions, and, desirous of obtaining travel particulars, we called on the Blue Funnel representatives, Messrs Butterfield & Swire. Agents, ship-owners,

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transport carriers, general merchants, the firm is known throughout the length and breadth of China as "Taikoo," meaning long-established and important. Welded in China's commercial life, you will find their traces in the biggest business centre or the remotest village. They are bone of the bone of trading China, and their name stands for straight dealing.

We were advised to take the train to Nanking, and from there proceed by boat to Hankow, our next objective. But before I left Shanghai I was to experience one of the most pleasant incidents of my visit. Sir John had given me an introduction to Mrs Pearl Buck, who in *Good Earth* has enshrined the Chinese peasant for all time, and I anticipated meeting her at Nanking University. She had, however, unexpectedly decided to sail for the States *via* Shanghai in order to receive the Pulitzer Prize awarded for her novel.

I suddenly realized she was in the lounge of the Metropole. A soft-eyed, brown-haired comely woman, she suggests all that can be signified by the word mother. You feel her large and tolerant affection, her understanding patience, all those things which errant man expects from woman who bore him. Quite simple and unspoiled by her success, she talked of the Chinese people, their psychology and religion.

While the Japanese, I learnt, are punctilious in their due attendance at the temples, neglecting no opportunity of worship, offering prayers and interceding at the Shinto shrines, the Chinese turn to their gods only in time of trouble. Misfortune or the threat of danger sends them helter-skelter to the temples with placatory oblations of rice, but as a matter of daily ritual Buddha does not come in. This point of view, that humanly speaking is so understandable, reminded me of our own empty churches. There are odd points of similarity between the outlook of the Chinese people and our own. With such a jolly, disorderly, liberty-loving crowd, rooted in family life and

with a genius for friendship, from the first moment I felt at home.

Mrs Buck warned me very kindly against the mistake of overtipping, which breeds contempt in a shrewd people trained to a sense of values. She warned me that cholera was rife in Nanking and that we must always drink boiled water, even in the process of tooth-brushing. Failing that we must fall back on soda or seltzer. Vegetables also we must avoid except in Western households; even hotels were suspect up the Yangtze. It was not, she felt, at this time of the year a wise proceeding on our part to go far afield, but at all events we must be careful—especially in the matter of fruit.

I watched poor Bunny's face register distress. Immensely plucky, she is always a little difficult over foreign diet, and perpetually hungers for British meals; now to her natural distaste for alien diet was added an additional terror. From that moment she went off her food, eschewed the most succulent varieties of salad, and gazed at the national pork with a glittering eye.

It was when Mrs Buck had left us for the landing-stage and the *Empress of India* that I had my first qualm of homesickness. I suddenly remembered that we were fabulously far from home, that Bunny was already drooping from the sun, and was likely to droop more in the months to come. July would be intolerable up the Yangtze, I learnt, and all sane white men and women left the river at this season for the hills. I was miserable, but I did not see how our plans could be changed, though the thought of mosquitoes—Peter had described the large and fiendish breed which infests Hankow—added to my fears. Everything in the insect line always bites Bunny! Should I persuade my friend to stay behind? There were doctors and electric fans and the next best thing to English diet in Shanghai, with Peter and his large friend as ministering angels.

But Bunny was not in a forsaking mood, and together

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we packed and made final arrangements for departure. But looking back, I feel that the beginnings of a terror that reached its culmination in Hankow stirred in me that night. The thermometer was rapidly rising, and while heat to me is a fulfilment of life—I expand to the utmost limit of energy—Bunny, a child of the temperate zone, grows physically resistless—the sun seems to melt her bones.

We had a great send-off the next morning. The railway to Nanking, one of the few lines in the country, is proud of its existence. Built by British capital with British equipment, for years it was under our control. Nowadays the direction is national but quite efficient. The hotel porter, a Russian refugee of many languages and much distinction—I always felt he had been a Grand Duke—had secured our tickets (in China you always book in advance) and shepherded our luggage, reduced to four suitcases and a hat-box. He was stopped at the barrier, however. Hotel employees are not allowed upon the platform, and not until he removed his cap, with the Metropole name emblazoned, was he allowed to enter. In his white suit he might have been a Consul at the least!

Peter arrived with books and papers and all our friends who had made Shanghai such a pleasant place. We travelled first-class, the crowds in the other parts being fairly dense. After a while, however, the pressure lessened, and people began to pour out at the stations a short way up the line. The Chinese as a rule do not like train travel. Their favourite method of transit is by water. They embark in a human torrent which literally envelops the river-boats.

The carriage—saloon fashion—was extremely clean and the conductor periodically dusted the windows and the tables. Most of the passengers were Chinese Army officers, wearing regulation khaki. They talked and smoked and spat emphatically—a habit they share with the citizens of the United States.



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The country was very flat and very green. *Padi*-fields—I was never tired of their emerald perfection—half submerged, were irrigated in primitive method by a kind of paddle-wheel turned by the foot, which transmits the water from a stream of a small canal into a tiny channel. You see them everywhere in China, tended by girls, who pass hour after hour in the same monotonous occupation.

Groups of cottages built of mud, stone, and in some cases of brick, came into view, but always huddled within a wall. Against the low-lying horizon you caught a glimpse of villages also enclosed, with a suggestion of streets and shops. Stone coffins protruded from the earth, and wooden ones, with now and again a long-roofed building suggesting a family tomb. The dead are buried in this fashion all over the countryside, though in the cities cemeteries are compulsory.

The trouble is that when you walk abroad it is essential that your shadow should not fall where the illustrious departed are deposited, otherwise you commit a sacrilege. This makes a stroll difficult and embarrassing. It is indeed sometimes almost impossible to pursue a straight course between the villages, so much do the graves outside the walls impede your path.

Water-buffaloes wallowed in ponds or drew heavy carts. Hens and ducks, pigs and geese, cackled and grunted, but of a cow one never saw a glimpse. In South China very few and far between, they are used only for meat. The Chinese never touch milk, though if they need it goats are available; and butter, like bread, is never met with outside the towns. Nowhere was any sign of machinery; all the labour on the land seemed to be done by hand. Conditions were as primitive as in the earliest dawn of agriculture; we might have been hundreds of miles in the interior instead of a few hours' distance from Shanghai.

The country, cultivated in traditional fashion to its last inch, unwound before us. Tiny naked children minded

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the pigs and led the buffaloes. Coolies in enormous bamboo straw hats tended their rice and carried pails of manure to the fields. In the absence of cows and sheep the only possible fertilizer is human excrement, which is used all over China. Occasionally a patch of water-melons or cucumbers broke the *padi*-fields, with onions, potatoes, and lettuces. Where a natural stream or river watered the ground the crops were ranged on terraces sloping upward from the bank, so that if the harvest on the lower level should rot in a sudden flood there might still be a chance of better luck up higher.

To me the astonishing thing was the absence of trees. Could it be possible that the Creator had denied the country adequate flora? If not, what had become of them?

I put the question to a scholarly Chinese who was reading an English newspaper. He smiled and explained in our native tongue quite beautifully spoken.

"The Chinese have a great respect for the spirits of place. We do not like to disturb or destroy a landscape in case we enrage them. For this reason the peasants never replant a spot, no matter how denuded. Every tree and shrub for miles around is cut down for fuel—cooking and heating is all done by charcoal—but once the wood is cut it is never grown again. The Kuomintang have started reafforestation, but you must not suppose that the peasants are like the Government, or the people of Shanghai. They live mostly in the same way as their forefathers, grow the same crops, eat the same food, marry and give in marriage."

"And suppose a peasant *did* replant a tree?"

"He would be terrified that devils would come after him. Perhaps," he smiled, "they might. Who shall say that demons do not exist?"

I assured him I should not venture on the assertion, and with ceremonious bows he departed, while I turned to the table for our meal of soup and curried chicken, nicely

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cooked and daintily served. It was quite excellent and, to my comfort, Bunny ate it.

It was past six when, after a nine hours' run, we arrived. There was only one hotel in Nanking, we were told, and recognizing the name on the porter's cap we hailed him and were driven then and there to the New Bridge. We were received by a manager who spoke German-English and allotted us a room with a balcony and bathroom attached. It was quite good accommodation and—undreamt-of luxury—hot water was laid on, in which we wallowed.

Downstairs in the dining-room, closely shuttered against mosquitoes, two or three Germans were having food, and a Chinese family. The meal was excellent and included some peaches, which Bunny resolutely refused. There was a quasi-provincial air about the house—it might have belonged to any small European town where commercial travellers congregate, and the Chinese screens, porcelain figures, and plates only stressed the similarity. In this particular setting they looked somehow like presents from Margate or Folkestone—even the scrolls by the door looked out of place.

In the lounge a gramophone was going full tilt with a jazz record to which a young American couple were dancing. The manageress—she had been five-and-twenty years in Nanking—hailed from Nottingham; the rest, excepting Bunny and me, were Prussian officers. An elderly man with the carriage and moustache of a cavalry colonel, was talking to a younger colleague. I gathered that he had been engaged by the Chinese Government as instructor to the Army, and they seemed to have been having a most amusing time.

"They are good boys," said the Colonel, "and some day they will learn to ride. But never shall I begin to understand Chinese logic."

He called it 'lō-gic,' but it meant the same.

"Three of the men deserted yesterday, and one of them

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came back to-night. He was shot! One might have thought that he would merely have been punished as he returned of his own will. But not at all! The Chinese Commandant explained that he might have run away again, and then they would never have got him!"

And with this comforting reflection we went to bed.

## CHAPTER VIII

### NANKING OF THE MING TOMB AND THE WHITE ELEPHANT

NANKING, the present capital of China since the deposition of "Peking the strong" to "Peiping the inconsiderable," has been harried through the ages. Like our border town of Carlisle, North and South have continually contended for her, while armies have encamped and bandit hordes descended on her. But behind stout walls she has preserved some portion of her ancient self inviolate. You may sit on the old ramparts that date thousands of years back and gaze down at the stream of motor-cars and rickshas, the medley of East and West, the whole current of life to-day. The division between tradition and modernism is far more acute than in Shanghai. You are indeed in separate centuries within a few miles' radius.

The New Bridge Hotel and contiguous districts lying outside the wall are within easy distance of the Bund. In the sunshine the sparkling waters of the Yangtsze, the old pontoon, the crowd of ricksha-boys, all the sleepy leisure of a river port only broken by a ship's arrival, make a delightful picture. But on that particular June morning the landscape was not inspiring. The rain was coming down not in sheets but unrolling as it were in vast lengths from a surcharged sky. China has the wettest rain I ever met!

We fished out our mackintoshes and umbrellas and, as it looked as though the rain had come to stay, decided to ignore it and explore. It was indeed imperative that

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we should do so. I wanted to fix up an interview with Lo Wen-kan, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and within the New Bridge there seemed no possibility of arranging it. The German manager had disappeared, the Nottingham manageress could not speak Chinese, and the hall-porter understood no English beyond the pidgin vernacular. Pantomime was useless. The envelope addressed to His Excellency in both languages did not advance us. The porter might ring up the Foreign Office, but couldn't explain who we were! It looked as though we were at a deadlock, and I was about to suggest a tour of investigation when suddenly I caught the sound of the word "Taikoo," the Chinese word for Butterfield and Swire.

"We will call and see the Agent," I said firmly. "He'll tell us what we ought to do."

I should, I suppose, have gone first to the Consulate. But in my roamings up and down the world I have rarely found a helpful or even an intelligent representative of His Britannic Majesty! When, however, you chance on a *rara avis* he is usually supreme. The Nanking variety entirely filled the bill, but in ignorance of this we made our way to the Bund. The ricksha-coolies were sheltering under huge straw hats and vast umbrellas of oiled paper or linen beautifully painted and coloured, and most efficacious as protection from the weather. A little farther on an impossible spectacle was presented! Stretched in a forlorn line were the most ancient and dilapidated vehicles in all the world, with the sorriest nags harnessed thereto. Bitten by the sun, disintegrated by the rain, beside these poor derelict broughams and exiled victorias our old friend the *droshky* of Russia would have seemed elegant. All the genteel traffic of the nineteenth century seems to find its collapsed way to China. How it gets there, by what strange methods of transport, remains a mystery. It may be that, originally winged dragons, the equipages are transformed by day and change into their celestial form by night. Certain it is that the horses seem

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to suffer from enchantment. When, very rarely, the driver gets a fare, the steed seems stricken with astonishment that the conveyance remains behind him. I caught one looking round at his own carriage with an expression of complete surprise! For the most part these poor cabs are relegated to the use of weddings and funerals, when they are packed to bursting.

"Taikoo" headquarters at Nanking rest on a pontoon that sways like a boat. In flood time the office rises with the water and subsides with the tide. We were given a delightful welcome by Number One, a charming person of the name of Campbell. All the "Taikoo" chiefs seem to bear the names of famous literary figures. We had met Shaw at Shanghai and were to discover Wells at Kobe!

The matter of the appointment with Lo Wen-kan was referred to the *compradore*, a suave gentleman with beautifully white teeth. Procedure is the breath of life to a Chinese. Its practice goes down to the roots of the nation; it is the flesh and blood of that marvellous process known as 'saving face.'

I had my first lesson in this gentle and very necessary art that morning. The *compradore* explained that Lo Wen-kan, being a Minister, should properly be approached by another Minister, which being interpreted meant that if for some reason he did not wish to see me I should be spared a direct refusal. The British representative would have to find an excuse!

Accordingly we went off to the Consulate in Mr Campbell's car. We were, he insisted, not to stop at the hotel but move on to the house where he and his wife were living. From the Bund we drove through the New Gate, cut sheer in the wall of the city on to a broad road. Wide and well built, it was made for the funeral of Sun Yat-sen in 1927. Modern shops line the route, the lovely floating banners are few—Westernism has spread its veneer on national things.

This aspect of the city continues with the march of the

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great road. There is something implacable in the un-deviating progress which swallowed streets, demolished dwellings in its relentless stride. You feel the strength, the persistence, the fatalism of China in its unerring sweep, until you arrive at its goal of beauty, the tomb of Sun Yat-sen.

In the heart of the Purple Mountain, in a scene so lovely that it catches the breath, the great iconoclast is buried. The mountain is thickly wooded—the Kuomintang have defied the devils and planted hundreds of trees—and rises graciously from the green hills that girdle the city on three sides, while on the fourth, as in obeisance, the Yangtze flows, impetuous, proud, shining and insolent in the reflected glory of the sky.

Sun Yat-sen's memorial is a conception of Young China. Springing from the roots of ancient beauty, it unites the outlook of to-day with that age-old tradition which permeates the Chinese spirit. The design suggests the shape of a bell. The wide opening with its long flight of broad stone steps leads to a Chinese arch from which the road gradually narrowing flows upward on its long ascent. Stone steps, Chinese arches, mark each phase of the white path that, cleaving its way like an arrow, symbolizes for me the efforts of the country to disentangle herself from the eddies of faction, the quicksands of intrigue. Here are no devil bridges, no devious routes; straight as the flight of a falcon rises the road in one long aspiration of fulfilment.

The tomb itself, preceded by outflanking vaults, contains the coffin of the man who ordained the Empire a republic. Within the covering shells of wood is the glass casket that holds his mortal body, duly embalmed.

There on the Purple Mountain, legend made manifest, lies the Chinese hero who slew the Manchu dragon. And as in China life and death always wind back to first beginnings, so from his rest he looks towards far-off Canton, where as a boy he lived and—dreamed.



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It is not a long journey from the memorial to Nanking's white elephant. It is not so called; the city regards the anachronism as a complete expression of the Western civilization at which unhappily she aims. No less than a stadium with accommodation for fifty thousand people, it cost as many pounds to build—the contributions of overseas Chinese who desired to erect a monument to their patriotic fidelity. Replete with every modern adjunct, racing-track, boxing-booths, dancing-floors, and a vast swimming bath in marble, it suffers from two drawbacks. The particular situation makes it difficult of access. There is no method of transport by which the huge audience could be brought there or got away; neither rickshas, nor victorias, nor motor conveyances could cope with the numbers, who, even if they arrived on foot, would find neither food nor lodging available. Hotels and boarding-houses do not exist. For this gigantic arena is not meant for the mass of the people who can and often do sleep under bamboo huts erected anywhere, but is designed to attract the wealthy devotees of sport from East and West. It aims to be a rival to Los Angeles, and already there is talk of holding a World's Sports Meeting in this Olympia of the East.

It is difficult at first to understand how such confusion of ideas can arise. The design and workmanship of the stadium—every inch built by hand labour—can compete with any Western rival. But while a most faithful reproduction has been made, the vital problem of how to set the audience in their places, feed, lodge, and entertain them, has been completely overlooked. In my opinion this discrepancy, which constantly recurs, is because the megalomania of modernism—the craving for bigger and taller hotels, larger and vaster institutions, mammoth stores, Gargantuan steamers—lies outside Chinese philosophy. And while externally they may absorb our cult and prove that in technique they are our equal if not our superior, interiorly they are unchanged.

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The stadium is alien in conception and execution. If it were a national expression like the Chinese theatre and other places of entertainment, it would be intimate and a stream of mixed traffic would percolate to its doors. But, like many immediate manifestations, it is a mere excrescence upon Chinese life, unrooted and impermanent. The seed must be implicit in the tree, the bamboo hut enshrined within the palace. Even the Temple of Heaven at Peking, which expresses *in excelsis* the spiritual desire for space born of perpetual physical indwelling, reveals this linking of the tiny with the infinite, so that the great pillars, the vaulting serenities which uphold and release the soul, suddenly seem small and dear, familiar as home.

The marble swimming-bath like a young lake invited our attendance. But, alas, we could not enjoy it! The bath was empty. It might—and again it might not—be filled by the next Friday.

Nanking has an excellent telephone service, admirably officered; also an electric installation which serves Chinese as well as European quarters. But she is still without main drainage or a water system. The City is making wide roads, reconstructing slums, building Ministries, but for the most part the changes are proceeding not from within her civilization, on which so many cultures have been grafted, but from without. At the moment she has neither digested nor absorbed the Westernism she aims at. The result is a curious patchwork of influences and effects.

The capital is full of schools and universities, hundreds of professors and thousands of students, most of whom speak American as distinct from English. There are innumerable welfare centres and improvement caucuses, and the Y.W.C.A. has several *dépôts*, all products of the United States which have definitely captured Nanking uplift. Thus the Soldiers and Sailors Club is known as the House of Moral Endeavour, and solemn young re-

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cruits swear neither to smoke nor drink without, I feel, realizing why they give so curious an undertaking!

Christianity is sporadically adopted often by official orders—General Feng having compulsorily baptized his army, battalion by battalion, through the agency of a hose-pipe, other commanders follow suit. But fundamentally their philosophy, like their food, remains unchanged.

There is an interesting contrast in the architectural development of modern Nanking. One school tends to the creation of the flat-faced buildings of America; the other perpetuates the gracious roofs, beautiful doors, all the salient points of traditional art with a modern expansion of house-room, sanitation, and home planning. The Ministry of Railways is a fine instance of this effective evolution, but the most striking example is Ginling College for Women.

It is a very lovely building enshrined with the dignity of old China yet complete to the least item in the comfort and convenience desired by the new. I felt in the design something of the emotion aroused by Sun Yat-sen's memorial—China resurgent, full of new growth, fresh hopes. Alas, the architect of Ginling is not Chinese! A young American, who has steeped himself in the æsthetic life of old Cathay, he has embellished the College windows with marvellous wrought-iron screens, enriched the doors with mother-of-pearl, inlet to a shimmering pattern. The class-rooms are lofty, the gymnasium a dream, the tennis-lawns and hockey-grounds the latest word.

Dr Wu, the Principal of Ginling, is a graduate of a U.S.A. University and speaks fluent American very quickly. The College accommodates several hundred students who come from all parts of the country to qualify for positions in the normal schools—mission or national—or for the more arduous life of mistress in a village school, often the only cultural centre for miles around.

The professors at Ginling are of both sexes and various nationalities, with an American predominance. The

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British members of the staff teach many subjects, which strangely enough do not include English literature. This is left to the guidance and pronunciation of a Pittsburg lady. Her knowledge of our language may be immense—her rendering is quite unintelligible. I literally could not understand one word of what she was saying and I shuddered to think what the students would make of her two idols—Shakespeare and Shaw! I obtained the information as to her preference from my *vis-à-vis* at lunch, a very pretty Southerner whose pleasing drawl is devoted to the interests of biology. I realize that germs are quite independent of accent, but it will always be a mystery to me why the Faculty at Ginling should have chosen an American lady to discourse on our men of letters. It is not that the Chinese cannot distinguish between the two nations with the same lingual roots. It is just one of those curious devices, those queer divagations, that punctuate their life at this particular moment.

Some, but not many, of the students take a course in Chinese classics; the majority prefer to concentrate on the modern and Western side. This is not, I think, from lack of patriotic pride or any admission of Western supremacy, but is a repercussion of that European arrogance which alternately incites the raging contempt and sterile competition of the Chinese nationals. Dr Wu's great pride was the excellence of the girls' hockey team and the stabilization of Western diet. We sat down to an excellent knife-and-fork meal of fried chicken, corn on the cob, and apple fritters, after which we paid a visit to Nanking the old, under the wing of Mrs Campbell.

Our hostess drove us to the limit of a terribly rough road; when the track narrowed to an impossible point we got out and walked. We had arrived at the old gate cut in a wall so heavily encrusted with years and grime that it seemed part of an archaic world. Under its low archway trafficked a dense stream of city dwellers, craftsmen, peddlers, men pushing one-wheel barrows, balanc-

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ing impossible burdens on frail poles. Here, however, the stream is not diversified by Western clothes or capitalism. All the grinding want, the ingenious heart-breaking expedients of a dead-level poverty, are displayed. A coolie wears a pair of slacks bearing the imprint of the National Relief Commission, a tiny child forages in the gutter for a stray bit of food, beggars multiply, smells strengthen, the lack of water becomes an objective thing. Men with pails slung from their shoulders cry out the precious fluid, fetched from the Yangtze. Yellow and turgid, it is not, I am told, so dangerous to life as the water from the street wells, into which the sewage percolates.

The water-melon season just beginning had brought out a swarm of street-sellers who hawked the fruit, cut into segments and black with flies, under the broiling sun.

"Cholera is at its worst when the melons ripen," said Mrs Campbell. "By the by, I hear there's a bad outbreak in Shanghai."

I assured her that was only rumour and asked how the Nanking epidemic was getting on, only to learn it had not yet begun!

Things are like that in China. Cholera in the summer months stalks about the country, and always on arrival at any destination we heard that it had fastened on the one before!

But through the flies and the smells and the almost frightening denseness of human flesh the pattern of the family still persisted. Each hovel, every room, sometimes a segment of a room, had its household laws. Old fathers, toothless yellow ancient dames, seamed and wrinkled, sat in the midst of naked babies while the young men plied their trade and the women washed clothes, cooked chow, or chattered with the water-sellers.

Noisy to the last point of endurance, the slums of the city are not ill-mannered. We were neither hustled nor hooted at; indeed, by a miraculous chance we almost got

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the snapshot of a bonny little boy, naked save for a silver necklet. But just as the camera came to position he was snatched up by his mother and borne indignantly away. It is extremely difficult to get a personal photograph in China. The question of devils once more intervenes, for if a picture of a man, woman, or child be taken, the evil spirits record it, so that when after death the originals arrive in the next world the demons will authentically claim them by the likeness! Even among the *intelligentzia*, where devils no longer hold full sway, the objection still lingers, especially with women, and only through personal influence and friendship were we able to secure some photographs of Chinese girls in their modern national dress.

It was amazing to leave the ingrained life of the Chinese slums for the agreeable existence of a British bungalow. Mrs Campbell's home stands on a hill looking out over pleasant leafy spaces and big houses. You mount a long, steep flight of steps which, cut in the hillside, winds through terraces of flowers and shrubs—all the dear familiar plants of our native countryside—marigolds and sunflowers, pansies and violas, and fuchsia and more exotic blooms flourishing between; with electric light from a dynamo on the premises, water laid on from a private well, mosquito-netting to keep out voracious blood-suckers, life goes smoothly on the hillside.

The British Colony keep socially separate from the Chinese. They have, indeed, a curiously intensive domestic existence. The men meet the national representatives of commercial or professional life, but the women remain practically *purdah* except to their own colour. The aftermath of the 1927 outbreak, when the Communists attacked the European Colony, still colours British feeling; in the same way the Chinese population resent the Western attitude towards the Japanese attack when, following the invasion of Shanghai in 1932, they bombarded Nanking. The French suffer from no such reactions and, like the

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Americans, mix freely with all classes of the East. You will generally meet a Chinese when you visit American households, and the relations between the two races are astonishingly friendly. They have a mutual enjoyment of simple practical jokes which endears them to each other. In the great game of saving your face you score a considerable point if you make your protagonist lose his physically rather than morally. It gives a Chinese intense mirth to practise Charlie Chaplin tactics, and to induce a man to sit on a chair which is not there would be pure joy! This habit does not apply to scholarly Confucians or young Sinologues. The Chinese Babbitts are recruited from the business class.

Thus far I had realized that the ferment of Western influence, while sectionally apparent, had left untouched the root reactions of the mass of the people. Only in certain cases can one feel that the outward and visible sign has anything to do with a mental or psychological adjustment. I was to encounter one even more striking instance of the fundamental difficulty of containing new wine in old bottles.

The Yangtze river dock-labourers have managed to put up their rates an all-round 50 per cent. Opportunists to a marked degree, they will threaten to down tools at the moment a big steamer is in dock waiting on harbour dues to be unloaded. But side by side with this appreciation of the time to strike runs an almost impossible refusal to coalesce with outside clans. Thus the men from the Houpei province will refuse to work with those from Anhwei or any other area, and *vice versa*. Contesting clans decline even to permit alternate shifts, and, because the same gang cannot work continuously night and day, operations have been brought to a standstill while the men in possession took their rest, the employment of their rivals being calculated to stop proceedings altogether. The only parallel I can recall in British industry is the boycotting of the Irish in the Lancashire coal-mines until the

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establishment of collective bargaining outrooted racial hostility.

This, however, the Chinese have yet to experience. Even patriotic feeling has to contend against the localism which, in military as well as economic affairs, so often prevents effective coalition.

Nanking, the new city and the old, externally divergent, internally unaltered, typified to me the truncated interests of the whole people; and yet I felt there must be some unifying principle within their own civilization which would weld parochial differentiations into a homogeneous whole.

And then quite suddenly I realized that in one direction at least national corporate action had been achieved—I remembered the boycott.

I had seen its strength in Shanghai, when despite the general proclamations of the Kuomintang, the specific admonitions of Mayor Wu and T. V. Soong, Financial Minister, the people steadily refused to buy Japanese goods, although the substitutes they purchased cost them more. The decision, which holds firm throughout the South, was arrived at not by Press propaganda, for I learnt that only a very small section of the older rural population can read, nor by public meetings and impassioned oratory—peasants do not express themselves through such media—but by the individual resolve of hundreds of thousands of families, which, endorsed by their respective clans, has built up a wall of impregnable decision unrent by internecine feud.

In Singapore I had been told that a Number One house-boy will not make a Japanese purchase for his employers. Even in the matter of securing the anti-mosquito incense which, set alight, keeps the pest away, they are adamant. The Japanese variety is infinitely superior to the national, but the only way a suffering white can get hold of it is either to go to the store on his own account or to place the money for the article on the table with an



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injunction to Providence or the devil to procure it, in which case Number One summons a Malay or a Tamil and sends him for the taboo!

As rigorous an enforcement is carried on in Hong Kong, and I found resistance strengthen as I went farther into China, a resistance which, while it retains the individualism germane to the soil, overflows the sectional opposition equally traditional.

Surely Young China could apply this method of absorption to the vital problem of stabilization?

I was to find the answer in the great Yangtze provinces, where peasant communities have bridged factional disruption by similar means.

Meanwhile Lo Wen-kan, Minister of Foreign Affairs, signified he would be pleased to receive me.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE SERIOUS MATTER OF DEVILS

THE Ministry of Foreign Affairs, like all the Government offices at Nanking, is not imposing. Crowds of children, ricksha-coolies, the usual curious onlookers, congregate outside in the inevitable family gatherings. The building is modern and undistinguished—it is a matter of national poverty, not of intent—and until I reached the Minister's private room there was no suggestion of traditional culture. But once the door was shut I was conscious of an atmosphere of quiet distinction. Rare paintings, small and full of lovely detail, were on the walls, scrolls beautifully embroidered, a red lacquer table held a gracious ivory figure and a rose quartz elephant. Outside, the streets of Nanking rattled with modern traffic; inside the room was a fine elegance, remote from any tremor or disturbance.

And then a Chinese gentleman appeared. He wore the long silk robe of his country with the dignity of tradition; his face subtly moulded, his drooping moustache, the fine ivory-tinted hands, suggested another era. He seemed to have stepped right out of history. I felt I was in touch with an older China, dignified, polished, penetrative, and aloof.

When he spoke I had one of the most delightful surprises I have ever experienced.

"So you come from Fleet Street?" he said, looking at my card. He spoke the most perfect English; there was a warmth of recognition in his voice that established an immediate understanding. "You live at Number Three? I

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remember it quite well. Your windows at the back look on Middle Temple Lane."

I agreed a little breathlessly. The Middle Temple—here in China!

"And you will know Pump Court? I had my chambers there when I used to come up from Oxford to eat my dinners. I am a member of the Inner Temple. I was called to the Bar in 1911."

He smiled and sighed a little retrospectively.

"Tell me, is Fountain Court unchanged?"

"It hasn't altered the least bit," I answered.

"The fountain, the birds, the children there are just the same? I like that so much."

As he spoke I was back once more in the old grey Temple courts, an island of calm in the ocean of Fleet Street clamour.

"And now you have come all this long way to see me?" He smiled and presently began to speak of China.

"Our two chief national dangers are floods and bandits," he said, as though he were opening a brief. "We are dealing with both. By the simple process of making roads and planting trees we shall defeat them. When the rain comes down there is so little vegetation to hold it that the rivers are swollen above their banks, crops are ruined, houses swept away, villages submerged, millions reduced to starvation. You know the devastation of the last flood? Well, a policy of reafforestation will help to prevent its recurrence. Everywhere the Government is planting young trees."

The Kuomintang is not elected to office. The Nationalist Party founded by Sun Yat-sen, of which it is the expression, endorses its authority at such times as a general meeting is convened.

Our conversation was interrupted by the arrival of the ceremonial tea in frail bowls patterned with the thousand flowers of a bygone age. We duly sipped the delicate nectar with its faint jasmine scent, and Lo Wen-kan

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turned his attention to roads. It was, I felt, a marvellous commentary on Chinese diplomacy that the Foreign Minister should discourse on agriculture and home-grown brigands. But there is a satisfaction in the recurrent topsy-turvy—it remains so true to rhythm.

“At the present we have hardly any railways in the interior, and roads are very often mere tracks. This enables bands of marauders to raid a district and make off before the troops can get up to them. With the establishment of connecting thoroughfares the bandit menace will considerably decrease.”

“Would the making of roads be entirely efficacious?” I inquired. “Is not a more drastic method necessary?”

“As the country is opened up communication will be easier, and commerce will absorb a large percentage of the bandits, who in many cases are peasants flooded out of their homes. If this year’s harvest is good, many will go back to their native villages and settle down. We have further plans for suppressing lawlessness. The Government is reviving the establishment of volunteers who will maintain local order and deal with insurgent malefactors. The plan was tried with marked success in the Taiping rebellion, when guerilla bands raided the country. The military could not deal effectively with them, they were too swift, too mobile; it was left to the district forces to suppress them.”

“And the Communists?” I asked.

“We are organizing a drive against the Reds which will push them from the Yangtze provinces.”

There was, of course, the question of Manchukuo, but here I was met with a suavity it was impossible to counter. The matter was before the League of Nations, China was waiting for the Lytton Report, which would decide the matter.

Lo Wen-kan to me presents the true conservatism of his race. He is too fastidiously cultured to be impressed by the gadgets of modern Western life. Cinemas leave him cold,

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the Stadium would hardly stir his consciousness. He told me very simply and most beautifully where he set his faith.

"We are in many ways a very poor country, but we are rich in the qualities our poverty has engendered. Our people can endure where others would collapse; we can live when those more easily nurtured would die. We have suffered famine, flood, plague, and invasion; and from all these calamities we have always risen stronger, more enduring than before. We are a home-loving, home-bred people, and the laws and customs of the country are built upon the institution of the family. Like the ancient Romans, we are patriarchal. On the death of the *pater-familias* the land is divided in equal portions among his children." He paused, a humorous smile in his kind eyes.

"Previous to the Republic, you know, sons were the sole inheritors, with provision for the widow. Now a daughter has the same rights as her brothers. She is equal with them before the law."

"And the division?" I asked. "The land must be split into smaller and smaller portions every time."

"It generally happens that while one or perhaps two sons are wedded to the soil, the others prefer to work in the cities. In such case they are paid the value of their inheritance in cash, either in a lump sum or by yearly increment. The system works quite well."

"And the general aims of the Kuomintang?"

"We wish to establish a democracy by successive phases. First to enforce law and order by a military dictatorship, second by tutelage to instruct and train the people until they are ready for the third and final phase—democratic suffrage."

His voice, gentle and cultured, flowed easily, but I missed the urge that had stressed his confession of faith in his land and his nation. I do not think that to him the three phases have passed beyond the phrase.

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As he spoke his long fingers moved towards his bowl of tea. We watched him ceremoniously sip, and then in order of etiquette took our leave.

Out again in the turmoil of the town among students, coolies, soldiers in khaki, Britishers and Americans, I wondered as to the exact point China's tutelage had reached. . . .

It seemed fitting somehow that we should go from Lo Wen-kan to the ancient Ming Tombs—or what is left of them. Nanking was the home of the Ming Dynasty founded in 1368 by Chu Yuan-chang, a native of Anhwei, who made the Yangtsze town his capital.

Peking has Ming tombs *in extenso*, but it is always the first beginnings that are the most important to the Chinese mind, and Nanking is still regarded as the due and proper cradle of the Imperial line.

We reached the tomb through a long avenue of queer beasts carved in stone. Great elephants, strange camels, dogs, Chinese lions, keep watch and ward over the mighty dead. Alas, their tombs, like their palaces, were hopelessly ravaged and destroyed when in the Taiping rebellion of 1853 its leader stormed Nanking, put to the sword the Manchu garrison, their wives and children, and established himself as Emperor. He had proclaimed himself head of the Taiping semi-religious movement, as the Tien Wang, or Heavenly King, with a mission to depose the Manchus in favour of a native dynasty. His own reign—he never established himself north of the Yangtsze—ended in 1864, when the whole movement degenerated into general pillage.

Even in 1853 the Western yeast had begun to ferment in China. Tien Wang was a missionary product, who, being denied baptism by his American converter, promptly founded a pseudo-Christianity of his own—with dire results. It is significant that often those Chinese leaders who build up a philosophy on alien roots seem to work the greatest destruction. Sun Yat-sen absorbed

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the ~~Protestant~~ culture, and plunged his country into chaos.

The last of the Ming tombs, like a lovely lament, stood outlined against a sad grey sky. The long lines of a sinuous dragon trailed down the roof, a giant tortoise, emblem of eternity, crouched inside the doors supporting a stone sarcophagus. At the entrance a picture-postcard nuisance spoke bad American volubly, and a man so venerable that he might have been coeval with the tortoise stretched out a shaking hand. He received his *cumsha*, and having bought the necessary views we retired. The rain descended in torrents and, the car having been left with the pre-historic beasts, we had to make a run for it.

It was in the rain that we saw a perfect piece of loveliness—a pendant picture to the tomb. Nanking still has its old mansions, though fallen largely to decay, and with them those precious miniatures in landscape-gardening where the cunning artist creates the illusion of space—that sudden opening-up of beauty which is ecstasy. I still recall the walls, inlet with curious flowers and patterns, the nine-tiered pagoda reached by a short flight of steps flanked by delicate willows, whose slim verdure veiled a laughing fountain perched like a river-god in a tiny pool. The weeds, alas, had overgrown the pathway, the pagoda was a little faded, the bronze incense-burner lacked the rich golden-brown of its true tint. But over the scene lay a spell of quiet beauty, the tenderness of small and exquisite things which time cannot destroy. Here in this little place was the setting for the courtliness and leisure, the long culture, the inherited appreciation of Old China.

How could a country steeped in the arts and crafts that have led the world, deflect her culture to material ends? How could the Stadium and the flat-faced stores complacently rear their commercial heads?

And yet I felt the phase would pass and China, like her native phoenix, rise afresh from the ashes of her old feuds, her modern follies, and, borne on the wings of

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national life new-sprung and upholding, mount strong as an eagle to fulfilment.

The next morning you would not have thought there had been even a summer shower. The city was ablaze with sunshine, the river glittered, the mosquitoes buzzed—every imaginable kind of insect took itself for a walk. That day for the first time we went on the Yangtze, the beautiful, terrible river that races in defiant swiftness at five knots. We raced along the river for miles in a motor-launch, skirting the quaysides laden with bales, past merchant ships heavy in the water with huge cargoes, past vast warehouses, fleets of lighters, junks, the irrepressible *sampan*, all harnessed to the trade between China and Great Britain. Everywhere English methods, English speech; names familiar through the United Kingdom stared from packing-cases, ports of origin on lifebelts revealed English towns. There was no escaping British trade and British interests, and as in Nanking, so farther up until navigation becomes impossible.

I grew quite irritated to find the Yangtze, the historic river that centres a tenth of the whole human race, a hinterland of British commerce. Where, I asked, were those vast aggregations of Chinese life untinged by outer influences, remote places where the inhabitants, so far removed from historic events, suppose the Dowager Empress still to be on the throne? Where those turbulent states that terrorized their peaceful neighbours into Communism?

The Yangtze was to show me that last and more immediate side. Meanwhile I came to the conclusion that if America has captured Chinese uplift, we most certainly dominate her business.

We were a cheerful launch party—our host and hostess, with Commodore Bailey Groman (lent to China by the British Navy to train one of her own) and his wife, and an American girl married to an American naval officer. The red waters of the Yangtze, called in Chinese the Child of



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the Sun, churned under our bows, a strong wind drove in our faces. The river seemed to swell in its strength and defiance.

Presently we reached the open country—vast stretches of rice, cabbage, turnip, beet, potatoes, peanuts, growing close to the ground; onions, egg-plant, marrow, and water-melon sloped almost to the water's edge. Nowhere was any sign of machinery; only by the sweat of his brow can man wrest a subsistence from the earth. Remembering the total absence of drainage and the people's close association with the soil, it was a wonder to me that millions of people did not annually die. But the tea habit saves them from the worst risks of infection; water is always on the boil, and those who cannot afford the national drink consume it piping hot. Mulberry plantations for silkworms—they date back to 2500 B.C.—lie more to the interior, like the tea plantations.

We were bound for a village up-river, and I looked forward eagerly to the experience. There is a radical difference between farm life in the East and West. In China there are no outlying cottages or solitary homesteads scattered on the landscape. Men, women, and children go out to the fields by day, but they live and sleep within a walled village. It may be the walls are built of stone or mud, but their shelter is essential, and night brings all home. The village is as thickly populated as the city slums, and for the same reason, mass protection against bandits and devils. It will take a long time to induce the peasants to plant trees like the Kuomintang; and I doubt if even in eternity they would divest themselves of the community habit of existence.

The launch drew up at a primitive little landing-stage, thick with spectators—small children, coolies, and a sprinkling of old men. Some of them spoke a little pidgin English, but in the village itself I did not hear a word, though at the same time our arrival, while it afforded amusement, roused no fear or resentment.

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This particular place is fairly prosperous. Lying fairly high, it had escaped the flood and the consequent starvation, and the children were healthy and well fed. Some of the houses, two storeys high, were of brick with an outside covering of matting, others were of stone and mud, and huts of bamboo matting supported on poles were everywhere. The bamboo is a synonym for life in China. A man may find food, build a dwelling, transport his goods, and weave a covering for his body from the fibres of the generous tree.

The main street was the Chinese city of Shanghai or Nanking in microcosm. Low-fronted shops with dark recesses stretching out of sight were piled with vegetables, meat, and junk; tailors stitched at open stalls; wheelwrights carried on their trade; melon-sellers, water-carriers, crowded the narrow space. The village barber plied his razor outside a poultry store, the wine-shop and the tea-house stood open for refreshments; an incessant noise like millions of human cicadas thrummed the air. Beyond the street, yet within the walls, were larger houses, with tiled roofs or wooden slats, and one, with a suggestion of the English countryside, was neatly thatched. You find thatched roofs now and again in China—she is a kind of international lucky bag, with bits and scraps from every land. Gardens there were none. It is only the wealthy Chinese who can indulge in such exquisite conceits.

But at every door of a brick house or bamboo hut was the high step that keeps off devils, and incidentally shuts out the rain! Sometimes of stone or wood, more often in the poorer parts of mud, the devil step is universal in palace and slum, city and rural life. But despite the step which fends off attack inside—it must never be forgotten that Chinese devils can only proceed on the flat—the powers of evil can and do congregate outside the home. Entire villages will occasionally be convulsed by the fear that mischief is abroad, and drums are beaten, pots and pans crashed, women scream, men shout, and children

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whimper—every kind of noise makes the air hideous until, routed by the avalanche of protest, the demons hide their diminished heads and slink away.

From the top of a hill reached by rough steps, we looked down on the clustering streets, the closely welded houses. Seen from the air, a Chinese village reminds one of a flock of sheep huddled for safety against a hedge. The general outline and internal conditions repeat themselves all over China, save for modifications of locality and climate. South of the Yangtze the people sleep on canvas stretched on a bamboo framework like a camp-bed, with a block of wood, a glass bottle, or a brick for pillow. In the cold areas of the North the entire family beds on the *kong*, a raised platform heated by charcoal from underneath. The North also grows corn where the South grows rice. The Yangtze is the dividing-line between the two nations—corn-eating and rice-eating, with all the differences, physical and mental, the two diets imply.

But underlying these divergences the comprehensive likeness remains, and having seen one village you are familiar with the essentials of all. I visited many others, but always through varying experiences my mind went back to the little river community on that June afternoon. Some of the people had never been beyond the outlying fields; Nanking was a fable, Peking a dream; year after year the people toiled on, living with amazing frugality on two meals a day and an occasional evening bowl of tea. Up with the dawn, they come home about ten o'clock for the family chow of beans, vegetables, and rice, fried, when luck is in, with pig's fat, and soya sauce to taste. On high days and holidays a small piece of pork may be added or a dish of eggs. The next chow is about four in the afternoon, after which meals are over for the day. And this, with a visit to the wine-shop and the barber, a gossip in the tea-house and family gatherings for marriage or funeral or national feast, is the existence of millions of peasants. As the men, so are the women. They work in the fields, bear



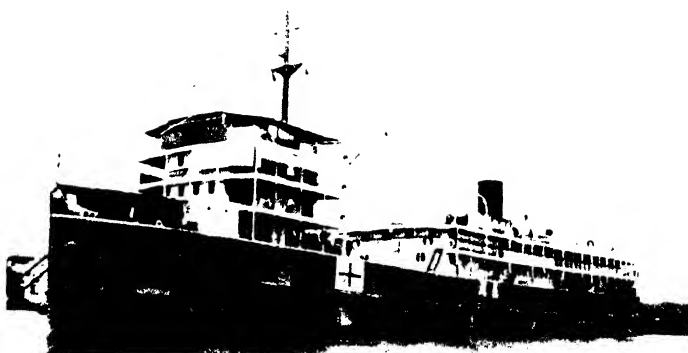
"WHEELWRIGHTS CARRIED ON THEIR TRADE"

(p. 143)



"THE MAIN STREET . . . A FEW ROUGH PLANKS"

(p. 149)



OUR YANGTZE STEAMER WITH STEEL GRILLE

(p. 151)

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children, cook and prepare chow, and generally run the household, in one long unbroken round.

The soil, overworked and underfed, has only a scanty yield; with all the national thrift, the margin of existence is so attenuated that only the tiniest provision for even leaner days can be put by. When you add to this the perpetual 'squeeze' which, running through the whole commercial system, drains any reserve almost dry, the harrying of the interior by rival war-lords, bandit chiefs, Government troops—each in turn levying tribute, or, as it is more politely called, collecting land-tax—the Chinese will to live becomes phenomenal.

*Cumsha* that afternoon was demanded by only a few small boys. There were not many beggars and I saw no physical deformities. Some of the people were dreadfully pitted with smallpox, but they mostly belonged to the older contingents. Within a fairly wide range of the big cities vaccination centres have been established, and in the interior medical missionaries carry on the crusade, so that, albeit with much misgiving, the younger generation are growing acclimatized to a precaution for which I share their fundamental dislike!

We found little difficulty in establishing a method of approach with the villagers, though the expression of emotion was limited on both sides. It is always difficult for me to understand that racial revulsion which inhibits so many and such diverse temperaments from human intercourse. I always find, curiously enough, that those who feel the colour bar most acutely react in the same way towards social disparity in their own country. Colour consciousness seems to include class, and the individual who describes a black man as a 'beastly nigger' will very generally refer to the unemployed as 'dam' lazy.'

The Chinese as I know them have no individual bias against foreigners. Their antagonism is founded on apprehension of aggression. The memory of national humiliation and territorial partition dies hard. What has hap-

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pened once may quite reasonably, they feel, occur again ; but, though the long list of exactions and penalties are acutely present to the Chinese mind, the Western peoples, more particularly the British, refuse to admit their right of complaint. In every case the Shanghai mind insists that the Chinese deserved whatever they got, and that it wasn't enough anyway. Thus while every instance of British 'savagism'—as in the Boxer rebellion—is overlooked, Chinese reprisal is never forgotten. I was reminded a hundred times that the murder of a missionary started in 1900 the campaign of vengeance. To my mind the number of missionaries put to death by the Chinese is amazingly small when we remember the circumstances in which they come to the country. Under threat of coercion China is compelled to allow every kind and variety of Christian preacher, his women and children, to enter freely and without question. Against this compulsion must be set the refusal to let Chinese settle in Australia or America, where they are definitely barred. But, acts of sporadic violence and demonstrations of hostility notwithstanding, the Chinese attitude is one of grievance against foreign nations rather than that of an individual and irrational hate.

The popular idea paints the Chinese character as cruel, crafty, cold, with an actual enjoyment of another's suffering that rules out all possibility of mutual help. Again and again I have heard that a Chinese, seeing a stranger sick unto death, will pass swiftly to the other side ; that a drowning man is never rescued nor a stray child taken in and fed ! This I was told as objective fact, continually recurrent ; and I discovered that it was so. I have myself seen in the Chinese quarter of Shanghai a man livid with suffering so intense that he was past inquiring for help ; the streets were crowded, but not one of his compatriots stretched out a hand, and it was left for an indignant Westerner to help him. This is not due to callousness.

The reason is deep-seated. It is the traditional and inviolable law that if you help a sick person or save a

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dying one from drowning, disease, or any other mortal ill, you accept the sufferer's responsibilities towards wife and family. Moreover, you incite the attention of those demons who have marked the soul for their own; you have frustrated them, therefore they pursue you.

I came across several instances of this vicarious penalization. A young Chinese took into his home a sick boy and nursed him to recovery. Midway in the patient's convalescence he was confronted with the lad's father and mother, their three young children, and an aged uncle. Very poor, very hungry, they had come, after immemorial custom, to stay. The good Samaritan had to pay them a considerable sum to cancel his obligation, otherwise they would have remained unto this day!

Cruelty, calculated and deliberate, is outside Chinese psychology. They are the most affectionate parents, and their filial devotion, tenderness for small pets, birds, and even cicadas, is amazing. Patient under insult or oppression, there is a point at which their anger flames up in a menace of undisciplined fury. But even then their resentment is short-lived. At Hankow in 1927 the attack on the British Concession entailed no casualties.

Moreover—and I have been a witness to the efficacy of the treatment—you can turn the angriest mob from violence to good-humour if you are sufficiently quick-witted to join in a demonstration against yourself!

We have all heard *ad nauseam* of Chinese tortures, but a little investigation reveals that their most excruciating methods of torment were not solely indigenous to the country. China has been regarded as the home of these horrors merely because she used them before any other country, even anticipating the usages of the Inquisition. In the department of torture, as in every section of Chinese life, devils have played a considerable part. The death of the thousand slices is, I suppose, one of the most fiendish forms of execution yet discovered, and ranks with death by the knout under the Tsars. The condemned, bound



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tightly with a rope so that portions of the flesh protrude between the coils, is carved to pieces—a tiny bit here, another there, until the executioner, using his sword like a surgeon's knife, has vivisected the entire body. Thus dismembered, the victim will arrive in the next world to find that the evil spirits have taken all the bits and scraps and that never again will he have a whole body.

This particular form of death has been abolished, though I heard from an eye-witness that in the interior he had seen a girl so 'sliced' ten years ago. She was a Communist, and as such judged deserving of the extreme penalty by the Governor of the province. At no time was it generally enforced, but, though it is an invention of the official and not the common mind, the Chinese man in the street is still put in the dock of public opinion.

Most of the prisons in China are run on modern lines. In these clean, humane places the inmates still retain their self-respect. They work in groups at their normal employments, and in the prisons that I visited men and women alike were cheerful and well-behaved.

A shrewd observer once said to me that destinies have been deflected and entire nations given the lie through the insidious power of a popular slogan.

"Believe me," said he, "the whole of the Western world to-day is influenced by Bret Harte's silly caption: 'For ways that are dark and tricks that are vain, the heathen Chinese is peculiar.' Heathen, mark you! Why, they had invented printing and the mariner's compass when we were running about in skins!"

## CHAPTER X

### THE YANGTSZE—CHILD OF THE SUN

THERE is something psychologically disturbing about the Yangtsze. To me it has a personality, powerful, placatory, insistently vital. Racing and raging from its source in far Thibet, it will suddenly smile and grow quiet, almost caressing. You may watch the ripples washing the *padi*-fields in childish play—the next minute the tide will seize upon a junk, twist it like a piece of paper, and throw it contemptuously aside. Almost as wide in parts as the Mississippi, its waters stretch to the skyline, obliterating all sign of land; and then, grown tired of supremacy, the ocean will narrow to a slender channel, gentle and friendly.

To me the Yangtsze expresses the soul of China. All her contending forces, economic, social, and political, seethe and bubble in the long fertile valley of this Child of the Sun.

The magic of the river seized on me from the moment we went aboard the steamer to Hankow. Nanking, the expression of Sino-Westernism, faded into the background. I was conscious of forces primitive and unharnessed. There was a fierce joy in the mere act of living.

Our ship, the *Woosung*, the last expression of complete comfort in the steamer line, had nothing of fierceness. I had had visions of going up the Yangtsze in a junk propelled in the quieter reaches with the *oleo*—a long oar worked by a squad of rowers—dragged in the swifter channels by tow ropes harnessed to a long line of coolies, who would battle over the land, straining against the

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ricing tide, so terrific the power of the stream that they would almost have to crawl. Such effort is unendurably painful to witness; as inch by inch the men dispute their way, you feel the strength of nature in its most terrific form. Here man, unaided by machinery, is less than the dust before the Yangtze's might. But as though to reassure her children the great river will bring down a junk at an incredible speed. It is necessary only to steer her—the Yangtze does the rest.

I still hope to go on a junk, but an unlimited overdraft on time is necessary, for it means months of travel. The junks, once the only means of transport for goods or passengers, have been hard hit by the river steamers, but a certain percentage still remain, and these can navigate reaches impossible for bigger craft.

From the deck I gazed at a panorama that changed every minute. Now we were running past low-lying fields, placid and intimate, the water silver and shining as the Thames. A minute later the scenery roughened; high hills with curious pointed claws, huge crags, crouching like beasts, rose from a steep and menacing shore; the river grew red and riotous, smoothing again to a translucent calm. Against the sky a slim pagoda was outlined, a fishing-boat with spreading net.

It was early afternoon when we left Nanking, waving a last farewell to our kind hosts and the dear old pontoon, and the sun did not set till just on seven. It went down in a sinister blaze of glory that touched the distant hills to blood-red and bathed the countryside in a curious vitreous green. Queer-shaped clouds clustered on the horizon—I felt at any moment that they might give birth to dragons! Occasionally a primitive landing-stage came into view, and *sampans* struggled upstream or were swept down, preceded sometimes by a company of ducks, wafted in this primitive fashion to market. Thousands of ducks go down the river in this way. They serve in transit as a floating larder, replenishing the family chow!

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Watching the huge canvas of the countryside unroll, I was more and more amazed at the calm assurance with which British trade maintains its supremacy. Ships of all nations ply on the Yangtze, but ours are predominant. The China Navigation Company—our old friend “Tai-koo”—run boats equal to anything in the pleasure-cruise line. Electric fans, ices, all the gadgets essential to the enjoyment of existence, are installed, with British breakfasts—if you can eat them—and French cooking! The officers are British—mostly Scots—the crew Chinese, and the two parts of the *personnel* work with a smooth exactness. The first-class passengers are indifferently Western or national, and while the latter preserve their individual family groups they mix quite freely with the rest at meals, and occasionally join in card games and other amusements.

I found no colour consciousness among the Western women. All of them American, they were attached to various missions and were very full of their work. The men, business and professional, were mostly residents in China, and years of contact with the people had engendered a comfortable reciprocity. I sunned myself in these surroundings. As the vagabond had told me, the Yangtze Britisher is largely untouched by the Shanghai mind.

The captain of the *Woosung* knew the river as well as his native Clyde. Our purser was familiar with its great cities and its tiniest ports. He had come to the Yangtze as a boy and started business as a general dealer in a Chinese river town. The people liked him, the merchants trusted him, he prospered, married an English wife, raised a family, and moved to Chungking, the marvellous city of the Yangtze Gorges. Built in terraces, the streets climb up and up, until the houses seem to cling like flies upon the face of the hill. Things went well with him and his until the Communist outbreak—Chungking was invaded by Reds, rescued by Government soldiers, recaptured by Communists, pillaged by each contingent, taxed and

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re-taxed, until trade broke down, and with hundreds of others the purser had to leave.

The internal conditions of some of the Yangtsze provinces since 1911, when the Manchu *régime* was smashed, can be described in four words—civil war, oppression, starvation. The only stable factors in a sea of contending Tuchans are the peasants, who, bled of their last cent, compelled to sell their crops, forced at the bayonet's point to raise opium instead of rice for the sake of increased profit, still maintain local order and, in the absence of all police, enforce the law.

The Kuomintang is trying desperately to pacificate the position, but the trouble is that only a small proportion of the military forces are recruited by the Government. Most of the armies are raised and commanded by individual Tuchans, who veer from side to side as the spirit of 'squeeze' moves them.

Meanwhile, opposing factions not only roam the countryside, but try to control the river. It was after dinner, under a clear sky, that I had my first intimation of danger. A shot suddenly rang out from the shore. I listened for the next report, but all was still.

"Are they firing at us?" I asked my neighbour.

"Probably. But there is not much to fear at this part of the river. The really dangerous points are farther up. Most of the boats that go beyond Hankow carry a steel grille and an armed guard for protection. There have been some pretty stiff brushes, I can tell you. The Communists are well in the saddle in some provinces, and they're out to make trouble any way they can. Then there are the ordinary bandit cut-throats, after your money, and the river pirates who want to capture the ship. And when you add to these the opium smugglers, who hide the dope all over the ship, you'll realize a job on a Yangtsze steamer is not exactly a joy-ride."

But despite all these alarums and excursions the routine of life remained unbroken. Nothing happened to disturb

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the peace. A ship that had left Nanking a few days before ours had to beat off an attacking force on the Kiangsi coast. In another case a captain had just time to flash a signal to one of the British gunboats that patrol the river to prevent the capture of officers and passengers for purposes of ransom.

Sometimes, however, the ship gets the worst of the affair. I heard an eerie story of an American skipper who retired to his bunk at eleven o'clock at night and was seen therein at twelve by his steward. In the morning cabin and bunk were empty—the captain had completely disappeared. The steamer, travelling all night, had not put in at port, nor had any boats come alongside. But, though the ship was searched from the bottom of the hold to the top of the look-out, not a trace of the missing man had been discovered. No one will ever know what happened—or why. It may be he had interfered with the dope traffic, or had made a member of the crew lose face so badly that family pride had to be assuaged. But be that as it may, all trace of him has gone. The Yangtze quite probably has him in safe keeping.

We had a hot but comfortable night. Our beds had adequate netting and the breed of mosquitoes was not perceptibly larger. The morning brought a fresh experience. We had stopped outside a landing-stage that served the country for miles around, packed with an enormous crowd of men, women, and children. The human cargo discharged itself into a lighter which, alarmingly overloaded, drew up alongside. And then there followed a curious, unnerving moment. The dense mass of flesh and blood was so tightly wedged that literally no one within the crowd could move. The only chance of disintegration lay with those farthest from the centre, who could have separated themselves without much trouble. The ship's gangway was lowered. The bo'sun at the foot stretched out a helping hand. Nobody took it, no one even moved. The conglomerate will held fast, not a unit attempted to

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unpack. When at last the tension shifted chaos ensued, every one moved at once in the same direction, and only by main force were they induced to advance in single file. There are times when the clan system has its physical disadvantages.

The river population is eternally on the move, fares are cheap, and apart from family migrations there is a floating contingent of casual labourers looking for work. All of them deck-passengers, the human sandwiching necessary to fit them into a limited space passes description. But they still exercise their genius for adapting the most unlikely conditions to their method of life, and, though packed almost beyond belief, they contrive to keep their family groups together.

It was on the *Woosung* that I first made acquaintance with the tea boys, who to the number of a hundred to a hundred and fifty come aboard a steamer to wait on the deck-passengers. They are not retained by the steamship company or by the *compradore* who arranges the third-class passages. They constitute themselves purveyors of refreshments and comfort, dispensing tea, reserving sleeping-berths for those who will pay the price, or a less crowded sitting-space. They also collect the fares from the people who have no tickets, and squeeze a few additional cash from those who do not know the rates. They will supply chow at a lower figure than the *compradore* and in multifarious ways make profit. The passengers like them, however, and appreciate their services, and by sheer tenacity they have forced themselves into a quasi-official position, transmitting to the purser the fares and tickets they collect.

On one of the biggest Yangtsze steamers the captain and the *compradore* decided to eliminate the tea boys and refused to allow them aboard. The sequel is an example of that lightning combination that distinguishes Chinese labour. Just as the steamer left her moorings two hundred boys leapt on to the deck, beat up the *compradore*, and

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entrenched themselves below. The lock-out was ended; the tea boys had come to stay.

It takes three days to go from Nanking to Hankow, stopping at intermediate ports. Of those I explored two were the most complete contrast imaginable. Kiukiang came first. Here up to 1927 Britain held a valuable concession. A portion of the foreshore still remains the private property of individual British, but the concession, with others on the Yangtze—notably Hankow—now belongs to China.

Kiukiang still retains something of British tradition. The roads in the ex-settlement are wide and clean, the shops well built, trees give refreshing shade, and the general air of space is not yet obliterated. In the more national quarters stores and purchasers, coolies and children, crowd together. The congestion increases outside the china-shops, where the products of the potteries, some sixty miles away, are marketed. Here you may see modern reproductions of old masterpieces—Ming teapots, porcelain kettles, figures of clay beautifully moulded and decorated. Tea-services of the popular rice pattern, in which semi-transparent grains diaper the bowls, can be had for a song. Ten dollars will purchase a replica of a dragon bowl, a handful of cash procure some of the worst specimens of modern manufacture. For, alas, here, as in Shanghai, Brummagem has infected native art!

A local tradesman felt we must take away some souvenirs. Only in Kiukiang, he explained, could we obtain a particular set of gods. Four in number, of the cheapest pottery, badly shaped and crudely painted, we protested against them, but the fact that their peculiarly repellent selves originated from the district outweighed for him æsthetic consideration. So to our treasure trove of lovely things these unspeakable objects were added. They stayed with us until we left Peking—neither by subterfuge nor violence could we rid ourselves of their detestable presence. Did we leave them in our hotel bedroom, the



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honesty of Number One brought him hurrying towards us with the information, and when I tried to smash them they would not break but merely bounced! "Besides," as Bunny always intervened, "after all, they're gods, and if we destroy them they may send us terribly bad luck," and so through sheer impassivity they kept their faces and tired our patience.

The village of Woosui was the tragic complement of Kiukiang. The landing-stage was already awash with the tide, and along the main street the few rough planks that kept the semblance of a path were floating. Before the summer months were out the water would rise to the first floor of the houses, which in time of flood would be totally submerged, with the population derelict and starving. Want in its most meagre form crept about the village. The children stared with the hopeless look of hunger, the men gathered in groups, eyed us sullenly as we passed. Dependent on the river transport for a living supplemented by land produce, trade depression had stricken them below the thin line of subsistence level. Communism, I was told, was rife in the neighbourhood. Already a Red area had been formed in which prices were regulated, produce distributed. But there was no sign of distribution here. A dead level of emaciated want stared one in the face; the consciousness that this congeries of human beings was condemned to an existence of unutterable denial tore at the springs of humanity. There are hundreds of places like Woosui, where children are born to suffer and life degenerates into a torpid endurance. . . .

We wanted to buy some paper fans; fans in China are like matches at home, everybody picks them up and uses them. Our progress from Shanghai had been strewn with those I had left behind, and once again we were without any. We found what we sought in the general stores, a tumble-down hovel with large gaping holes in the walls. And here between a basket of potatoes and a bag of onions stood a packet of English Lux—price 10½d.! It

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was an incredible discovery, but in China, as I found, England is never far away.

"I've been over here for fifty-five years," a purser on one of the Yangtze steamers told me. "I've been to every part of the country, and wherever you go, no matter how deserted the place or how important the town, you'll always find another Britisher has been before you!"

You never have time to bore or be bored on the Yangtze. The human current shifts as rapidly as the river, and already there were fresh faces aboard. Among the newcomers was Bishop Roots, an American Episcopalian. Slight, eager, with kind penetrative eyes and a quick humorous mouth, he travels bareheaded, oblivious of storm or sun, and covers miles and miles of the roughest country on foot. This strange and fascinating country attracts the most diverse types, but recurrent through her history you find certain rare spirits who, without losing their own national characteristics or methods of thought, come to understand the philosophic outlook of the Chinese, their motives of conduct and methods of approach, which to the unsympathetic and uninitiated are such dreadful stumbling-blocks. The Bishop is of this company. He represents to thousands of Chinese an honourable understanding, and has spent forty-five years not in imposing Westernism on an unwilling people, but in assisting them to reshape conditions in line with their traditions. He is a great man who leads a very simple life.

Every reach of the Yangtze has its special significance. The Bishop, since the day when as a youth he travelled to Hankow with the great Viceroy Li Hung-chang, has been steeped in its history.

We had come to one of these low-lying stretches where the stream rises unchecked. The line of the dykes, like a strong broad back, stood above the river-level, but the small cottages and islet homes of the fisher folk, flush with the tide, were under water and would soon be submerged.

"In the great flood of 1931," said Bishop Roots, "this

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whole countryside as far as the eye could reach was blotted out. There was not a tree nor a house to be seen—only a dreadful and devouring sheet of water. Corpses were carried by the tide in hundreds, men, women, and little children. Some of those who were spared went through even worse things.”

He told me of mothers compelled to see their children die from lack of food, of their frantic efforts to stave off starvation with bits of grass and lumps of mud, their attempts to induce less poverty-stricken people to adopt or buy the unhappy little creatures. But very often a purchaser could not be found, and then a woman had to choose between watching her baby die of hunger or letting it perish out of sight. And this not only in times of flood—famine recurrently shadows the land.

I wish it were possible to re-create in words what every thinking person travelling on the Yangtsze must experience—the sensation that life there, outside one’s own particular orbit, is daily being cruelly, desperately, torn apart. Each mile brings an aching contrast between one’s immediate pleasurable surroundings and the racking uncertainty that is the daily portion of innumerable human beings. Always to me the Yangtsze is the stage on which China’s fate is perpetually fought out—her silent suffering, thwarted heroism, her maimed but resurgent triumph, repeated yet again.

In the blazing heat of an afternoon sun I was shown a spot among the trees where mothers desperate beyond all hope expose their dying infants. Close by is a Catholic mission, and the sisters give a few coppers to anyone who tells them when a child has been left there. The messenger will bring the news but not the baby—custom forbids, and though the sister hastens she is not always first. Sometimes the dogs, famished and ravening, get there before her. . . .

The Bishop began to tell me a story. There are many missionaries of divers sects up the Yangtsze, and, as we all know, sometimes one of them is murdered. This very

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often has been the occasion of a punitive expedition by a foreign Power in which hundreds of innocent people have lost their lives. In the particular case he mentioned the matter had a different ending.

"A few years ago," he began, "a Lazarist Father in Chungking was killed by an anti-foreign mob. The Catholic Bishop told me that the Chinese authorities were trying to discover the guilty parties. 'But,' said he, 'I do not think the police will go deep enough in their investigations. I feel we must get to the root of the matter. And so I have written to the friends and relatives of the dead man and they have sent me money. On the spot where he was killed we are building a medical dispensary, so that every time the people go to be healed—they will remember.'"

He paused, and in the silence the splash of the water sounded almost gentle.

The Yangtze is full of tales. I heard of a padre whose little mission church and presbytery were destroyed by bandits, while he himself was taken prisoner and marched miles into the interior. He came back to his parish eighteen months later, sick and shattered, but alive. He had lost two fingers, but how, he never told. He said the bandits had been "quite good" to him, and with the aid of his people he started building a church all over again.

There is an aged minister and brave fighter, known for his strong anti-Communist attitude, who is still in the hands of the Reds. They will not let him go, and exhibit him on platforms as an awful warning! But the old man gets his own back. Once on the platform, he preaches the Gospel hard and fast until the audience cheers or fades away. A colleague of his, also captured, has been made a professor under duress and instructs the young Communist idea in Western economics!

And as I listened to these things the long flow of crops went on and on. With such amazing results from primitive cultivation, modern methods of fertilization under a stable government would produce sufficient wealth for all. But

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as it is, life in the Yangtsze is in two divergent sections ; nowhere have I seen so acute a difference between those who produce and those who exploit.

The same division cuts across the social side. The first-class Chinese seemed quite unconscious of the overcrowding of the deck-passengers. This indifference in the case of Young China, however, is breaking down. For the first time in her history the young people of well-to-do families are uniting with the rural and town workers for more humane conditions. Some of the most interesting experiments are being tried out on the Yangtsze, and, as I later discovered, within a few miles of a waterlogged and derelict community you will find a centre bustling with civic enterprise.

We came to an amusingly wrong conclusion concerning one Chinese passenger. A heavily built man, he sat silent and contemplative in his deck-chair, till with an agile suddenness he rose to his feet and began to make slow and sweeping gestures full of obeisance in the direction of the shore. We were in full view of an old Taoist temple, and supposed he was performing religious homage to his ancestors. But long after we had passed the spot he continued, his eyes staring into space, his right arm shooting out, his left automatically curved, his whole body swaying in a half-circle.

"He must be a priest of some sort," said Bunny.

No one interfered with his devotions ; with innate good breeding the Chinese simply looked the other way, and did not even pass where he was standing. I was beginning to feel exhausted at the display of so much energy when the purser touched me on the shoulder.

"You see that Chinese? He's practising shadow boxing. They go in for it very much out here—he'll keep on for hours and hours."

Apart from this idiosyncrasy the Chinese seemed quite normal. He was, I afterwards learnt, an engineer to the Flood Relief Commission in charge of one of the local dykes.

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Meanwhile behind these shifting impressions I was conscious of the permanent background supplied by the captain and his officers. "Mind your own business" is a national proverb in China, and one which the wisest of our race adopt. This implicit non-interference is, I think, one of the reasons for the close friendship and loyal understanding so often found between individual Britishers and Chinese. The skipper of the *Woosung* exemplified this philosophy. He ran his ship easily, was nice to every one, and pursued the even tenor of his way—which incidentally includes the collection of specimens of local handicraft. The great arts of China have always sprung from a tiny centre. Foochow, the original home of lacquer, was once a small village; now grown and commercialized, it still retains its old perfection. Wuhu on the Yangtze specializes in wrought ironwork; bamboo shoots, willow wands, lotus flowers, with reproductions of country types, are hammered out. The most famous Wuhu craftsman is a blacksmith, but like most creative geniuses he has a temperament and only works when the spirit moves him, falling betweenwhiles into opium dreams. The supply therefore is limited, but some of the choicest examples decorate the captain's cabin with *papier-mâché* boxes, inlaid mother-of-pearl, Peking *cloisonné*, and marvellous embroideries, blending perfectly, as does all Chinese art, into their Western setting.

It was in the early morning that we sighted Hankow. Built at the mouth of the Han river, it is the centre of an industrial area second in size and importance only to Shanghai. It was there that Borodin, the Soviet agent who brought Communism to the Yangtze, established his headquarters.

I longed to start exploring. "But first," said the Bishop, "you must have breakfast," and with the innumerable friends who had come to meet him we joined the episcopal throng and went ashore.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE PERILS OF HANKOW

FROM the moment we stepped on the Bund at Hankow things went with a bang. Some one, I think it was the representative of "Taikoo," dispatched our baggage to the Terminus Hotel—Termin Fantan, as the ricksha-coolies call it—and secured our rooms, and we found ourselves struggling to keep up with the Bishop, who in a temperature of 110° strode along at a terrific pace. It was very jolly and most exciting. Everybody seemed to know him and was quite perceptibly pleased to see him—from naked toddlers and young students to aged men. As we progressed we added to our numbers a bright-eyed little colonel named Hsu, pronounced Shu, a deacon from the Bishop's church, and a trail of students. Together we all went to the headquarters of the China Inland Mission, where we met the Rev. Findlay Andrews, who is known to every one in China, and can tell you far more about the country in ten minutes than most people discover in as many years.

That morning to me was like a news-reel in which every incident left its stamp on the memory. I recall the Bund—standardized British—and the enormous Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank with its vast cavernous rooms, wide balconies, and roof-garden; anything more gloomily palatial is difficult to imagine; it is, I feel, a distant connection of the Albert Memorial. And then there was the Bishop's church, a very pleasant homely building with Chinese texts and decorations, and rows of fairy lamps after the fashion of the coloured lanterns which decorate the streets

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at feast times. The Bishop does not aspire to a palace, he lives in an unpretentious house which, were he not gently restrained, he would divest of every article of furniture and apparel for the more needy of his people.

Out in the streets the hum and bustle of the city grew more clear. I felt a change of rhythm.

Hankow to Shanghai is as Manchester to London. With Hanyan and Wuchang it is known as the triple city, and, built at the confluence of the Yangtze and the Han, is the centre of a vast industrial area. Cotton-mills, pig-curing and egg-freezing factories, ironworks, shipping, trades of all kinds, dominate the district. But while in Shanghai the International Settlement is the business hub, in Hankow the interests of the Bund do not swamp the Chinese. Here there is no actual boundary which sets a foreign landmark on national soil. Individuals and trading companies have acquired freeholds, but their rights are permitted and defined by the country's law. There is little apparent antagonism between the white and the national, though the social barrier remains; but on that first morning I was conscious of a new note—Young China was learning industrially to walk alone.

We settled into our hotel very quickly. A large gaunt place, Termin Fantan is rather better than an English equivalent in the Provinces. It has no lift, but a bathroom is attached to every bedroom; the delights of "hot and cold" are to be found in all the international hotels, though at present the service only extends to a few private houses.

By this time we had fully gathered why Hankow is difficult, if not impossible, in July. The air indoors, like a heavy blanket impregnated with steam, clogs the lungs so thickly that the only way to breathe comfortably is to sit under, or in front of, an electric fan. Some scalding tea and a hot bath, however, revived us—but neither Bunny nor I were equal to food.

Downstairs we found the Bishop and a Chinese colonel



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connected with the dykes, a string of officials, a cosmopolitan publicity agent, and Findlay Andrews, who presented the whole crowd to a famous dignitary, the head of the Moslems of China, General Ma. He had come to Hankow on a special mission, hence the opportunity of meeting him.

There is, I always feel, an innate force about a great personality, which, apart from anything that may be said, rings up the consciousness with a sharp thrill. The General, in a long white robe, with fastidious moustaches and an air of imperious command, was definitely some one to be reckoned with. He held a tiny cedarwood fan in his right hand and the dainty trifle seemed to stress his Eastern masculinity.

We all sat round a table and patiently waited. And presently he began to speak. Every now and then he paused and Findlay Andrews translated with unbroken fluency. The General explained that, as the representative of the Chinese millions professing the Mahommedan faith, he was glad to assure the representatives of foreign countries there present of the loyalty of his co-religionists to the Kuomintang, and their desire to establish its supremacy in the North of China and Manchuria.

It was an important statement and meant that the guerilla warfare of the rival war-lords in the North might decrease, if not stop. He bowed as he listened to his own words repeated in English and invited us to make any observations—with a glance towards the Bishop. But neither he nor anyone else had a chance beside the publicity man.

The psychology of this particular type has always amused me. It exists, as we know, to puff people and specialities through news paragraphs or by advertisement. But although the slogan of the trade is 'the personal touch,' rarely does a member of the calling realize its significance. It was important to this particular individual that he should enlist the interest of the General. He was

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in charge of the publicity of a film company, who were taking a picture in Manchuria. One might have supposed he would have tried a diplomatic method of approach, but no, with pachydermatous insensitivity he began to boom.

He started off with the news that his company were making the biggest picture the world had ever seen—the first taken in Manchuria. The information left the General mildly interested. How should a commander of camel corps, Mongol horsemen, all the insolent trappings of the Great North, be stirred by a camera!

The next effort was not so good. The publicity man explained that he had met the General's nephew and had stayed at the family palace in the North.

"He's a splendid young man, your nephew, quite modern and up-to-date, a fine shot and a magnificent horseman. He's my buddy." The publicity man was city-bred.

The General's right eyebrow was slightly elevated.

"My nephew is young and not over-wise," answered the Presence.

A less robust vanity might have been stayed—not so our hero.

"Will you tell the General his nephew gave me his favourite mare and two rolls of camel cloth, and a porcelain bowl that has been in the family for over two hundred years?" continued the non-stop Press. "He was very bucked that I admired them."

A smile puckered on the translator's lips and I guessed the reason why. In China, if you are thick-skinned enough to try, you may acquire all sorts of valuable gifts by simply saying how much you like them! It is etiquette to present you with the desire of your eyes forthwith. I had visions of the poor nephew living up to his ancestral traditions, and handing over more and more of his possessions. When, however, the late guest went on to speak of his host's gold dinner service of a hundred pieces, I gave a smothered groan.

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"I bet he got the gold vegetable-dishes and the soup-tureen all right," I whispered to Bunny, and whether my voice carried, or he sensed the anguish of my soul, the garrulous one suddenly stopped the story of his acquisitions.

The last request was that General Ma should be informed that the nephew had been photographed by the agent for the first time in his young life.

But here the translator drew the line.

"I think not, if you don't mind," said he. "You see, it is against strict Moslem tenets to be photographed, so I hardly think the information would be welcome."

After this we got our second breath and the General explained that his people, while retaining all the customs and habits of their religion, regarded themselves as indigenous to China. He concluded the audience by presenting us with copies of his poems, for he is at once a famous soldier and a distinguished writer. His love-songs, I am told, are among the best of the moderns. He inscribed each volume with his name and seal, and his secretary distributed them. The publicity man was somehow overlooked, but with the most perfect courtesy imaginable. He returned that night to the North, where I have no doubt he added to his collection of gold dinner-pieces. I pictured the nephew growing more and more denuded, until, left with a single sauceboat, he threw the barbarian out!

From the hotel we went to the British Consulate to see H.M.'s representative. Square-shouldered and with the air of a country squire, he suggested his native land quite pleasantly, but I realized another angle of his temperament when I saw above his mantelpiece a lovely piece of Chinese tapestry.

"My house-boys gave it to me when I left Nanking," he explained. "The inscription says all kinds of nice things." He was very hopeful of China settling down, as the prospects of a good harvest would undoubtedly

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decrease the bandits; and he warned me that cholera already had just arrived and that Hankow would soon be too hot for human habitation! I should have loved to ask him his real opinion as to what was happening—whether he thought the Kuomintang would be able to suppress Communism, let alone the bandits, and how far the interior was affected by Red propaganda. But on the rare occasions when you find a Consul with decided views, he will not express them, to a journalist at any rate! Or if he does, it is usually not his personal but his official opinions he ventilates. I liked this one all the same, and especially his attitude to China!

I had an exciting time in the next few days. The epic of the dykes, the battle of the floods, were re-created. The great rivers of China for generations have enslaved the people; now at last they have been squarely fought. Hankow has made herself impregnable behind huge dykes wide enough and strong enough to carry a heavy stream of traffic; each district has its squad of repair men, its superintending engineer, to guard against the treacherous inroads of the river. The whole vast scheme was unfolded to me. Early each morning when even Hankow has an air of youthful freshness, the Bishop and the Colonel would take me on an expedition up the Yangtze or the Han. The confluence of the two rivers is an actual and beautiful sight. The red waters of the Child of the Sun merge into the pale gold of the tributary in a magnificent swirl of laughter and terror.

The Colonel had placed the motor-launch of the Commission at our disposal. Swift as a swallow, she ate up the miles. Life on the *Lee Nung*—which signifies Good Farmer—opened a wonderful chapter. At dawn during the summer months a strong breeze rises from the Han, relieving the dank pressure of the night. Not until sunset does it die down, when the town gasps again in suffocation. The wind blows fiercely, an implacable sun possesses the sky, the current pulls defiantly—you feel the

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sudden impact of elemental things. My face was flayed, my mouth parched, my lips cracked. My whole body, beaten and battered by the north-wester, gasped for relief; and yet I never felt so utterly alive. The shore slipped past like a streak, the town merged into open hilly country, but on and on the dykes continued. Now and again we passed a squad of coolies monotonously 'tamping' weak spots in the embankment. The Colonel would give a graphic account of a hand-to-hand fight against the stream struggling to overthrow the ramparts. Meanwhile the skipper, a jolly round-faced Chinese, continually sent us scalding cups of tea infinitely more refreshing than iced drinks.

At times the longing for those marvellous mornings is so vivid that the river almost takes concrete form and once again I feel the razor-blade of the wind, the savage blaze of the sun, the impetus of the rushing tide.

It was on a particularly torrid morning that I saw a forest of junks at the mouth of the Han. Their slim masts pierced the air like saplings—small, slender, big, imposing, they lay together in shapely rows, waiting for trade—or the tide. Here was China *in excelsis*. Western steamers, British boats, had faded off the horizon, the national craft possessed the port, so that one forgot the existence of the Bund just round the corner. From the bank of the river rose the chimneys of modern Chinese factories—between two massive shafts a slender pagoda still held the memory of old days.

"On that spot," said the Bishop, "there used to stand the House of the Yellow Crane."

"It has a story?" I said eagerly, and persuaded him to tell it to me. Chinese fairy-tales to me have an aroma of their own. This one has all the fragrance of an old Peking garden where on a lazy day I sipped *samsu*.

Once upon a time there was a poor man who kept a wineshop. He toiled early and late and sold good wine, but, alas, there were only a few customers to taste it, and

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though he worked the sun round he could not make enough to keep himself in rice, let alone soya-beans! Yet he was not discontented, but slaved away light-heartedly and was kind to his poorer neighbours and observed his ancestral duties. The fame of his simple and industrious life reached the fairies, who discussed the matter seriously. One evening after sunset as he sat alone in his shop hoping for a customer, a fairy suddenly flew in on a beautiful yellow crane! She told the good man that she and her sisters had decided to help him make the wineshop profitable. She had therefore brought the yellow crane as a gift. As she spoke she waved her wand and the crane flew up on the wall and remained there as a picture. "You have only to call and he will fly down," she said, "to do your bidding, till you command him to go back."

It was even as the fairy had said. The crane flew on to the wall and flew off again obediently, and the fame of the good man and his wineshop grew and grew, until money filled his coffers. But he was still simple and industrious. And the fairies, greatly pleased, helped him once more. Instead of having to buy his vintage from a merchant, they put a spell on the well in the courtyard, so that it ran with good wine which the crane drew up in a bucket. And money came in fast and faster and the wine-keeper grew very rich, so rich indeed that he became greedy, and complained to the crane that he was losing money, for when he had bought the wine in barrels he had made profit by the sale of the empty casks—and now casks there were none!

The crane repeated what he said to the fairy. Greatly grieved, she appeared and warned the ungrateful one that if he did not repent, and stop grumbling, evil would befall him. But he did not heed, and suddenly the well stopped running wine and the bucket drew up water! But the foolish one's heart was hardened and he grumbled more than ever, so that the fairy came again, called the crane off the wall, mounted on his back, and flew away.

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The customers ceased coming, the shop was empty. All was as before!

I looked wistfully at the spot. Alas, only in legend can the yellow crane return!

Bunny had not accompanied us on our journeyings. The fevered clamminess of the climate had weakened her, added to which she could not eat the hotel food, and declined offers of chicken, curry, and the rest. It was an awkward predicament. The resources of Hankow could not produce a British meal—as we understand such—and I was driven to try and unearth some of the potted forms of nourishment which might tempt the appetite. At last I ran our own familiar Bovril to earth at the Hankow dispensary. This company manufactures mineral and distilled waters and its products are distributed far and wide. But this is not their only claim to distinction. In the middle of China the establishment still retains the air and appurtenance of Glasgow—with an Eurasian girl at the face-cream counter. Very Scot of very Scot the character of the staff, like their dialect, is granitic, and has modified both the accent and the manner of the Chinese dispenser. Five shillings was the cost of the bottle, and, I felt, cheap at the price. For Bunny imbibed the stuff and seemed a little better, and I comforted myself that she was suffering from a summer chill, and with rest and care would soon recapture her gay, light-hearted self.

But one morning after an amazing six hours on the river I returned to find her white, shaking, obviously ill, with a temperature. Influenza, we decided, though I admit I was not convinced, and ringing up the Bishop—he was always our rock of defence—asked him to send a doctor.

He came, and like the Hankow dispensary, brought canny Scotland with him. I shall never forget his tall figure in an aggressively white suit, his grave face and pale hands. A very kind and a very clever man, he is

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so Scots that he is as incapable of an assuaging word as of a bedside manner.

I recounted Bunny's symptoms and he gazed at my little friend in stony silence—like the Ancient Mariner, he had a glittering eye!

"It's—it's not dangerous?" I asked, quaking.

"Everything is dangerous in Hankow," he said solemnly, "especially in the summer. She must go to hospital for observation."

"But—but——" He wrote out a prescription and waved me aside.

"Telephone the matron and ask when she can go in. Meanwhile see she takes her medicine." He looked at me accusingly. "What are you doing here at this time of the year?"

I murmured that I had come to see the country, the people and the dykes.

"Madness!" he retorted, and stalked out. He wasn't comforting, but apparently solace is not part of his job, and I suggested to Bunny that after all perhaps the hospital . . .

But here I was met with an opposition which I immediately reinforced. Hospital—the very word sounded like death. At the other side of the world—distance at that moment seemed to become palpable, Fleet Street an infinitesimal streak at the end of a giant tube—whatever happened she could not be trusted to strange hands.

But the matter was not settled and next morning her symptoms were serious, and she was seized with sickness, cramp, internal pains sharp and agonizing. The anguish of that moment comes back even now. The hotel bedroom, smoking with heat, seemed to grow actually cold. The dread word that holds for Europeans such terrible significance painted itself on the bare walls, the ceiling, spread across the floor!

Cholera! I seemed to hear it on the air, a myriad voices shouted it. Cholera, and we were fourteen thou-



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sand miles from home—home, which she had left to come with me.

The terror crept into my blood. I could not tell her what I feared, and she, though we shared the thought, was silent also.

The house-boy came to say that one of the heads of a big industrial corporation was waiting to see me, and I remembered the Colonel had fixed the appointment. I went downstairs and explained that my friend was ill, and like a lamb this most important personality withdrew and, moreover, went direct to the Colonel and told him that I was distressed. For it had come to this, that the hotel accommodation could not cope with serious illness, and Bunny would have to go or remain in danger. Arrangements must be made, and quickly, but for the moment I had no one to help me. The Bishop was out, the Consul remote, the management kind but vague. And then quite suddenly—how eagerly I welcomed him—the Colonel appeared, minus lunch and siesta, anxious only to do all he could. Friendship, often of slow growth, sometimes comes to full flower in the forcing-house of circumstance, and never did I realize this so fully as on that afternoon. The suspicion of cholera has a scaring effect on most people, but the Colonel discounted it.

“I’ll come with you to the International Hospital,” he said; “it will be easier than telephoning.”

He put me in his private ricksha, chartered one for himself, and together we set off through the streets. It was a ghastly journey. Bunny at the hotel in agony and before me a bleak image of a vast institution with alien doctors, severe nurses, and that general air of non-human aloofness that characterizes anything international. But that there would be any difficulty in securing admission, I never dreamt.

I found out my mistake. It was summer, and, as the doctor had said, in Hankow that means serious illness.

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Every bed was occupied, every ward public or private full to capacity.

I stared blindly at the sister in charge, and I suppose my face must have told its story, for she took compassion on me and told me to sit down and wait. Through the open windows came the queer noises of the streets, the cry of the builders, the chant of the water-carrier, the melon-sellers, all the high-pitched rhythms I had learnt to love. But on that afternoon the life had gone out of them, they sounded almost like a dirge, and every mile in all the length between China and England grew longer. It was this consciousness of exile that stressed the comfort and relief the hospital ultimately gave.

It has nothing of the institutional. Its atmosphere has the kindliness, the humanity, and the care we associate with the idea of home. Not a large place, the medical staff represents nearly every Western nation, while the nursing is done by the Missioners of Mary, a Catholic sisterhood trained to the service of the sick.

All sorts and conditions, classes, nations, and sects go to this place for healing. A Chinese general, they told me, was due for an operation; in the room next to him was an English seaman with pneumonia—in the public ward Russian, French, Chinese, American, and German patients were together. . . .

The sister returned to say that there would be a vacant room that evening. The doctor had given permission for a patient to leave, and Bunny could be received that night. An ambulance arrived at the appointed time after the authentic pattern of the London County Council, which gave the finishing touch to the suggestion of doom! That journey remains a nightmare in my mind. I handed Bunny over to the sister, who let me stay long past the official hour, and went back to a ghastly night. It was one of the hottest of the season—and in that awful temperature I almost dissolved. Hankow, moreover, thought fit to add to my experiences. At about one o'clock a most

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appalling disturbance broke out in the street below. Shouts, the trampling of feet, the crashing of stones—it sounded like bandits, revolution, murder at the least!

It was none of these things, however, merely a demonstration of students against the attitude of the Kuomintang towards Japan, which needed, Young China felt, a little gingering up. Student demonstrations are a comparatively new feature in Chinese life. At the time of the Shanghai invasion they demonstrated their desire for war by lying in hundreds on the Nanking railway line, and when this method of peaceful persuasion failed to move the Government they beat up the Foreign Secretary so badly that he had to take to his bed.

The hospital could tell me nothing about Bunny till noon next day, when I had the news that cholera had spared her. She was suffering from dysentery and though really bad the relief was so great that she looked almost well! She was in a charming room with a wide balcony overlooking a garden planted with trees and flowers. Pleasantly shady of a late afternoon it was a meeting-ground for all those patients well enough to get out, and in a complete friendliness and utter inability to understand what they said to one another the various nations hobnobbed! The English sailor would tell his mates of the beauties of Wei-hei-wei, which he likened to Southend. The Chinese general, with a large escort, would bow graciously to those assembled and hold court under a tree. A French girl, wide-eyed and pathetic, remembered Paris with her friend, and a Persian sunned himself in silent contentment. It was a soft-voiced aggregation, full of kindly and considerate fellowship.

It was a passing experience to most of these sick wanderers, who would ultimately reach their native shores. But, as I realized quite suddenly, the sisters were perpetual exiles. Gathered from all over the world—France, Canada, Spain, Holland—not one would ever see again the land that gave her birth. Perhaps the knowledge that

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life for them held no possibility of reunion made the sisters even more tenderly concerned to bring to those they nursed the atmosphere of home.

"Did you hear the sisters in chapel this morning?" said the sailorman to Bunny. "They was singing an English hymn—sounded fine, it did."

Bunny as usual was completely spoiled. The *amah*—she takes the place of a probationer in a British hospital—tended her like a baby.

"Missy got master?" she asked, with the universal feminine curiosity as to marriage. The negative reply amazed and yet thrilled her.

"Me got master!" she replied proudly. Bunny afterwards learnt that the *amah's* particular property was bed-ridden and, with three children, wholly dependent on her earnings. But his invalidism did not in the least detract from the importance of his position. He was her master all the same. A delicate-featured, dainty little creature with a particularly sweet smile, the *amah* was one of the few city women we met who had bound feet. The bones, in the process of compression, are practically pulped, and to enable the victim to walk her feet have always to be tightly bandaged, otherwise the poor distorted things could not support their owner's weight. To and fro all day the *amah* trotted, like Hans Andersen's mermaid, every step the thrust of a sword.

Whatever else the Republic may have demolished, for one thing the whole of womankind should give thanks—that the law abolishing bound feet has saved thousands of town-dwellers from this most ghastly torment, though in the countryside the practice still remains.

It was at the hospital that I had the most vivid picture of Hankow in flood.

"It was the silence that was so dreadful," a sister told me. "The houses were flooded almost to the second storey, and there wasn't a sound of life to be heard—nothing but the soft lap, lap, lap of the water against the

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walls. Night and day the town was in the same ghastly stillness—until the stealthy sucking of the tide seemed to fill the whole world. Higher and higher came the water, rising in some parts twenty feet in a night. We had to move our patients to the top floor. The heating apparatus in the basement was flooded and the electric light went out. The streets became canals, and *sampans* plied for hire—the ricksha-coolies ran and ran until the water reached their chins, when they had to give up or be drowned. Hundreds of corpses floated past our windows, boats piled up with refugees capsized, and every day brought more boats, more refugees, thousands of men and women, babies and young children, homeless, without food.”

Some of the sisters, I learnt, used to go out each morning with help for the people on the railway. It stands high and at first was well above the flood. But the water crept up and up and the poor things on top were drowned . . . and through it all the deadened sound of the gurgling water.

But even in that wilderness the Chinese managed to create a kind of home. Huts of bamboo matting sprang up on the tiniest elevation, charcoal braziers appeared on which the family dinners were somehow cooked. But gradually famine and disease competed with the flood. Camps were formed where thousands of victims were housed and fed, and the hut-dwellers were gathered in. Committees were organized under the direction of the National Relief Commission, and rations of flour and rice were served out, public works started, clothes distributed, with medical comforts and care.

The majority of the flood victims have now been dispersed. Some have returned to their villages, others have found jobs. But there is a tragic surplus who have no homes to go to and who can get no work. What the flood left in many cases the bandits have taken, and though the younger men have struck out afresh thousands of

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women and children remain without provision for the future. Of these, sixty thousand were still in camp on the Black Mountain when I was there. Some distance up the Han, it lies on the edge of a Communist area, but the Reds have never made a move against the settlement which sheltered some of their number during the flood.

I wanted very much to see the camp and the Bishop arranged to take me. We started very early, but I was already on fire for the morning wind and sat on the *Lee Nung* drinking in the rushing air, and meanwhile the Bishop pointed out the queer and beautiful devices on the dykes, patterned in stone or gravel, painted on the sides of a house, on the banners floating from the shops.

A 'chop,' the Chinese name for a symbolic design, is an indispensable part of existence. Every transaction requires a lucky sign, and those Western firms who understand Chinese psychology study their customers' taste and enclose their wares appropriately wrapped. A tasteful chop makes for brisk trade and good relations, and one of the reasons for the success of certain British firms is their knowledge of this fact—witness Messrs Burroughs & Wellcome, who have practically captured the medicine trade in China. Each of their remedies has its own particular chop, by which it is known from Mukden to Shanghai!

Unfortunately this idiosyncrasy is overlooked by many traders, who in the routine fashion that has so often crippled British industry insist that they never have used a chop and don't intend to do so. One of the many things I learnt in the land of wisdom was the curious obstinacy of British commercialism which refuses to admit changing conditions or the lapse of time.

Following the discussion on chops we found ourselves in a magnificent reach. The Han with almost the majesty of the Yangtze rolled away to a distant skyline from which there suddenly emerged a tall hillside, dotted with

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long lines of huts and crowds of people. A party of young men waved a greeting and raced down to the shore.

The *Lee Nung* came in to the landing-stage. We were enveloped by smiling eager faces—boy and girl students stretched out hands of welcome. The Bishop was surrounded, the Colonel and I, duly escorted, followed him—it seemed at least at twenty miles an hour—up the long incline where, in the sunshine of a tropical afternoon, lay the camp.

Gasping but determined we clambered on and up, to arrive in a state of physical disintegration at the end of the journey!

Such was my introduction to the Black Mountain.

## CHAPTER XII

### CAMPS, COMMUNISM, AND CONFUCIUS

THE camp, admirably run and administered, was controlled by the members and a body of students from the National University of Wuchang. Remembering the consequences of vicarious responsibility in China I felt that these young people were greatly daring or extremely Westernized, until I realized that they had gone to the refugees' homes and not brought them to their own. Also, their particular work was not only admirable, but part and parcel of Confucian teaching!

I had always supposed that this great teacher had enjoined the subservience of youth to age without any reference to the particular type of elder or the kind of orders he might issue, and the ancestral altar had come to signify the sacrificial stone on which individual will or inclination must implicitly be laid. Now for the first time I learnt that the relation between youth and age carries a double responsibility. It is not only the duty of the son to feed and succour his father; he must also point out the path of duty to paternal feet that backslide, and must urge the rights of justice as against evil-doing even to the point of laying down his own life. Confucius also defined other fundamental relations: the mutual obligations between husband and wife, brother and sister, friend and friend. Meanwhile the paternal relationship runs throughout the fabric of society. Every functionary has his advisers, each ruler his censors, who are the keepers of his conscience.

It was in 1907, when the Manchu *régime* was tottering to its grave, that the Dowager Empress, "Old Buddha,"



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as the people called her, drafted an order for a foreign massacre; the telegram to be despatched to all her vice-roys ran as follows: "Support the Manchus; kill the foreigners." The censors, however, to whom in unbreakable procedure it was submitted, decided that the act of the Empress was not dictated by considerations of the highest virtue, and knowing exactly what the consequences to themselves would be, altered the text so that it ran: "Support the Manchus; protect the foreigners." In due course they were discovered and as inevitably executed; and the original telegram was despatched once more. And here Confucian teaching triumphed again. The vice-roys decided that of the two conflicting messages, one good and one evil, they must obey the good, and so the foreigners were spared; and years after on the Black Mountain I heard the story and understood just how and why the students were managing the camp of sixty thousand souls!

Built close together, though the whole space of the hillside was available, each hut of mud or matting held a separate family with its various generations. A narrow path like the familiar village street ran between endless rows, each home diversified by bits of coloured calico, a bright splash of paint, a distinctive chop on a wall. Already a number of trades had established themselves. The men ran a wheelwright's shop, a junk store, and a shoemaker's stall. Others peddled melon, and fish fresh caught from the river. But the pride of the camp was the tea hut. Built, organized, and run by a student of eighteen it was a most ingenious arrangement and might, I felt, have been lifted from *The Swiss Family Robinson*.

Water on the mountain, as everywhere else, is suspect of germs, and must be boiled for use. But the people had no effective method of heating it until an inventor came along. He and his friends dug deep holes in the ground in which by means of a forced draught he burnt the rubbish of the camp—spare bits of wood, balls of clay,

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anything and everything—as well as coal supplied by the charitable. Over the fires were slung huge boilers full of river water, which, continually replenished, made the camp tea with an overplus for cooking and washing. Night and day the fires were kept burning. The inventor, a grave young man with spectacles and a pleasant voice, told me in slow, but quite good English, learnt in Wuchang, that he and his friends were spending their vacation at the camp running a health centre, an inoculation hut, schools for the children, training *depôts* for the women, where they were taught embroidery work, the making of slippers, weaving, and other handicrafts.

In a huge crowd we ascended to higher and higher points where operations were in full swing. I shall not easily forget a school, run by a young girl and two youths, in an ancestral temple. There are many of these temples on the countryside, decorated by tablets which record the virtues of the departed. The landowners of the neighbourhood had lent them to the camp, and seated on low and narrow forms solemn-eyed little boys and exquisite small girls learnt to read and write the Chinese script, and imbibed the history of their country. The temple that I liked best was stately yet restrained, with a high vaulted roof and an altar of pure loveliness. These ancestral fanes have a classic bareness; austerity of form rather than richness of ornament distinguishes them. Confucius is commemorated in serenity of thought and detachment of spirit; there is something of ancient Rome in the stark nobility of the buildings.

The teacher, in a charming Chinese gown of blue linen, had a tiny flower-like face, as sensitive and expressive as her hands. She was giving a lesson on folk-songs, and the chirp of the young voices floated up the hill. I had a talk with Mei Chia, as she was called. In her halting but really vivid English she explained that she was training for a teacher. She specialized in health and sanitation, and her voice grew tragic as she told me of districts swept

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by disease, where whole communities had been destroyed by cholera and typhus.

Young China in her person stood out in a clear perspective. She had adapted certain Western methods to national psychology, but remained fundamentally of her country. She was in charge of the students' canteen and proudly showed me the wire covers over the meat, the bowl, and plate reserved for each individual.

A class-mate of hers looked after the bean-soup kitchen. Here in huge cauldrons the students boiled soya-beans to a consistency of milk, of which it has the colour and very much the taste. Nursing mothers and small babies thrived on the liquid, which was distributed night and morning. The segregation compound for suspect cases was empty. There had been a slight outbreak of cholera, but it had died down with the advent of the boiled-water system and a large percentage of the campers had been inoculated against typhoid.

My spirit was more than willing, but the flesh in a temperature of  $110^{\circ}$  was melting away. I staggered up a last incline and sat on the top of the hill to get cool and absorb my surroundings. The hilltop was deserted, belief in the devils who haunt high places still held good, even though modern sanitation had begun to creep in. And why not? I asked myself, looking down on the rushing river, that had borne junk and *sampans* in full sail when socially we were still on all fours !

To this day trees have a curious effect on me and to go into a strange wood after nightfall needs a deliberate effort of will. A queer, almost a hostile influence comes from them, and in the darkness the branches seem to close up in a green and living wall. On that hilltop the ghosts of dead trees seemed to haunt me. I was a disturber of their peace, an alien intruder on their ancient soil. The immense age of the spot whereon I stood was an awful comment on the vanity of human existence. And then far down the valley I heard the voices of the students.

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Incredibly old, eternally young, China is perpetually reburgeoning.

The food for the camp, they told me, when at last I reached the landing-stage, came from the stores of the Relief Commission. But, alas, the reserves were nearly spent. Each month brought improved conditions to a handful of the people—some got married, others refound their lost husbands or were sheltered by friends. But the vast majority were still unable wholly to support themselves, and if assistance failed . . . The earnest faces of the students followed me up the river. I remember in the paper that evening—Hankow has its English Press—there was an account of a fight between a local war-lord and the Nationalist general who had been sent to suppress him. The net result was a military draw and the destruction of acres of crops. . . .

Meanwhile the students carry on. I saw another of their enterprises in the city of Wuchang, where two thousand refugees—women, children, and sixty old men—are housed in a tumbledown palace. Here education was in full swing. Youngsters were busy on invoices, casting up accounts on the abacus, an arrangement of wooden balls strung on wires—first cousin to the Russian *shchetah*—on which China performs miracles of accountancy, computing Mexican dollars in terms of English sterling and every other currency. Deprived of an abacus we found it somewhat difficult to strike a balance. It was easy to remember that fifteen dollars fifty cents went to the pound, but the difficulty came with the difference between silver cents and copper cash. For one of the former you receive a bagful of the latter until you literally stagger under the weight of your change. A further difficulty is that Shanghai paper currency is not available in Nanking, while Hankow repudiates the notes of both—or any other city—and so on right through the country, where, however, silver always holds good. In the old days porters were employed to carry the precious metal in sacks. With less

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time and labour at our disposition we changed English notes as we went along.

None of these difficulties stumped the small boys at the school. I watched their fingers fly along the wire with amazement. The singing class was not entirely national. Western notation had been introduced, but I confess the amalgamation was most pleasant. For the rest, the women and their children were beautifully clean, well fed, and happy. They slept in dormitories, long bare airy rooms with truckle beds crammed close together, the method preserving the traditional overcrowding while introducing an element of health. The camp included a number of girl orphans, some of whom were to be drafted to a special home, while others would be found husbands at a marriageable age, when the dowry would go towards the expense of the settlement. In China the dowry, in delicious topsy-turvy, is paid by the husband's people to the guardians of the bride.

The sixty old men, lean-shanked, cavernous-cheeked, looked like fine prints on yellow parchment. They were too aged to do much, but when they could they swept the floors and tended the stove and kept an eye on the babies. One venerable father had a yellow oriole that sang with piercing sweetness. Some of the others kept pigeons and one had a tame rat.

Leaving the menagerie with some regret I went back to the hotel for food and a bath, and on to Bunny. By this time I had been adopted by a ricksha-coolie, named Wing, who, waiting outside the hotel for interminable hours, would spring to attention directly I appeared. He was tragically pleased when I suggested that a dollar a day for odd journeys to the hospital when he was available would suit me. He always was available and equally of course was paid to full measure. A quick intelligent youngster, he learnt to understand exactly where I wished to go and gradually I extended my evening explorations.

The International Hospital was a popular meeting-

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place in Hankow. Women and babies hung round outside the gates; ricksha-coolies waited for hire, playing *fantan*, telling stories, skylarking, and throwing sweat-towels at one another. These same towels in varying degrees of freshness play an important part in Chinese life. At the conclusion of a meal, Western or national, at home or in a restaurant, towels impregnated with hot steam are handed round to all the guests. You dab your face and wipe your hands in joy and exultation!

Wing used to take me through the byways of the Chinese city, a vast hinterland stretching beyond and about the ex-British Concession. We visited queer little curio-shops, and tea-houses where the finest and most delicately flavoured brews are made. Hankow in its prime was the centre of the China tea trade, which has fallen on such evil times. Tasters and buyers from all over the world assembled there and tried out the crops of the Yangtze valley.

Those were the palmy days when mandarins blazing like sunsets were carried in regal chairs, when the courtyards of the palaces were filled with a vast retinue of dependants—wives, concubines, and children. To-day the mandarin and his fabulous costume have passed away. The Republic banned the Manchu dress as they abolished the pigtail, and in every village notices forbidding them were published; and yet you still may see an aged countryman wearing his queue—so hard does custom die.

But now that the old order with all its vices and tolerations has disintegrated, what manner of *régime* will China ultimately establish? The question had been staring at me since I came up the Yangtze. On the one hand I found the most complete unity of culture among the Chinese people; on the other, an economic and political disruption that tears the country apart.

The two remedies advanced are Nationalism as expressed by the Kuomintang with its policy of development by roads, reafforestation, and social welfare; and

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the redistribution of property, its consolidation and protection by Communism.

The village of Chin San is a good example of Nationalist policy. Run by the students with the elders of the community, it has a certain financial backing from the American missions, but I was told it had already turned the corner and was practically a self-supporting unit. It lies some miles up the Han, and on a sweltering morning the Bishop, the Colonel, and I set forth on the *Lee Nung*. A very pretty spot, Chin San remains enshrined in my memory as one of the Yangtze jewels. Fisherfolk had their cottages near the water edge, but at this point the ground was above the level of the highest tide. We walked over the hill crest through fields of beet and cabbages, on to the rice plantations, threaded with tiny bridges across minute canals.

Our first call was at a farmhouse. Substantially built, great sheets of matting on its roof and sides kept out the heat and cast a pleasant shade. A wide door opened on a courtyard crowded with children. A high step before the house door kept off the devils, and crossing it we found ourselves in a kitchen with a big stove built of clay with holes for charcoal braziers. From here we passed into a lofty room of imposing dimensions. The ancestral tablets fronted us from the end wall above a shelf with a lovely Ming bowl. Down each side of the room small alcoves were screened off, containing beds of canvas and coloured blankets. Red lacquer chairs, a huge table, and a fine cabinet were the chief articles of furniture. The wooden floor was strewn with mats, some of carpet, hand-woven, others of bamboo straw. Four generations lived in this house. The oldest and most benign woman I have ever seen sat nursing a baby of a month old; small creatures played at the knees of an octogenarian who still preserved his sight and hearing, and the sons and daughters, husbands and wives, children and great-grandchildren, were beyond count.

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I was presented to the venerable lady with the infant and handed on to the farmer's wife, who, bowing, offered me a seat. A young lad presently arrived with the ceremonial tea—green, this time, and scented with a wonderful aroma. The family gathered round and in a friendly way conversed—the Bishop translating. The harvest promised well, I learnt, and prospects were so good that my host intended to buy additional land. His youngest son had returned from the city owing to the trade depression and was going to start ploughing as soon as the deal was through. Most of the girls and women wore the coolie dress of short white coat and trousers, their sleek black hair bound close to the head. The old women tottered on crippled feet, but the younger ones walked freely. The students held weekly classes on physical culture and general health, and bound feet were taboo. There was a dignity about this family, a background of permanence that left a deep impression.

We left in a succession of bows and handshakes, the great-grandmother in old-fashioned courtesy shaking her own as a symbol of pleasure and gratification. This pretty custom is dying out among the younger generation, but remains with those of the traditional school.

From the farm we went to a mud cottage. A table, some stools, and a canvas bed furnished the two rooms, crowded with humanity. But the little wife and mother was beautifully neat and exquisitely mannered, and brought us the ceremonial hot water—she was too poor to offer tea—with a gracious smile. But though life was on a very narrow margin of subsistence famine was far from the family. The plot of ground furnished food, and Father worked for a farmer, so that unless flood or drought intervened the future seemed fairly settled.

But to the peasant nothing is certain. A good-looking lad of almost twenty-eight, who lived farther up the river, told us that on the whole he had had good luck.

“My land is on three levels,” said he, “and for the last



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three years the crops on one of them have always been saved! ”

The main street was thriving and smelt fresh! The wells were regularly disinfected and there was some talk of provision for public baths. Clubs and institutes were part of the social life, and an ex-soldiers' association in a tiny room with papers and posters reminded me of an East London branch of the British Legion. There was also a mission church in friendly proximity to a temple. It has always seemed to me a little hard on the Chinese that they should be presented with so many different forms of Christianity, remembering that after all Buddha is fairly condensed! But on the whole I have come to the conclusion that those Chinese who accept our Western faith translate it back to its original Eastern form, where it blends and tones with their traditional belief. Chin San at any rate showed no veneer of Westernism. Unlike Nanking, its whole development was within the framework of the national philosophy.

The village school was run by a sweet-faced woman who had given up her life to Chin San. A fervent believer in the Kuomintang, she taught the precepts of Sun Yat-sen, its founder, with an almost religious fervour. There are throughout China communities like Chin San, self-supporting and self-governed, which—free from bandits or civil war—steadily flourish. But there are vast areas where the writ of Kuomintang does not run and the life and land of the peasantry are perpetually threatened.

In opposition to Kuomintang and what may economically be termed family ownership is the principle of collective ownership vested in district Soviets. It is very often said that the Chinese are too conservative to embrace the tenets of Communism, that the unit of the household is the eternal bulwark against the Soviet. But it will be found that the family principle which covers the clan may extend to an entire community. Each village has its hall where the ancestors of the clan are worshipped. The rules

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of ritual and procedure are posted by the elders, elected by the village families. In the case of a larger district with two or three different clans a temple is built, and the ancestral tablets hung on the walls. The officers of the temple, where some local deity is also worshipped, are elected each year, and act as a kind of parish council, maintaining order and attending to the lighting of the roads, etc. They try civil and criminal cases under the family system, which occasionally penalizes the head of the household for the misdemeanour of a member.

I was told that this practice transferred to city life will hold a neighbourhood responsible for the illicit actions of an inhabitant, so that the people of a district may be judged guilty or punished in the person of the head man! This in part explains the refusal of the coolies of one district to work with those of another, as in the case of the Yangtze dockers. Combined action might involve dual responsibility.

But though the members of the clan grow and multiply, procedure remains the same. This social usage, for so long established, needs only an extension to include economics. First the family, then the clan, then the clans may and do acquire land to be controlled and administered by their elected elders. The principle once admitted, it wants but a single step to vest the ownership in a community, from whence it proceeds to the State. It should be remembered that the Chinese people have always paid a land tax, which in essence admits centralized land control. Thus, side by side with the vital fundamental of family life, collectivization flourishes. At this moment large territories, some of them with a bigger area than that of France, are under Communist rule.

The land inside their borders is held by the Soviet and leased to the people, who pay economic rent. At present individual buying and selling continues, but—and this is the important point—commodity prices are regulated by the Soviet. In one area the price of rice stood at a hun-

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dred and fifty per cent. less than the market figure outside. Elsewhere the difference, though less marked, is maintained. Factories are being built, enthusiasm for education is general, and a special Communist ideography is in use. An exhaustive survey of newspaper reports and dossiers prepared by officials of the Shanghai International Settlement, coupled with the testimony of English and Americans who, taken prisoner, experienced actual Soviet conditions, go to show that an increase of social comfort and security with a diminishing percentage of 'squeeze' characterize Communist states.

Meanwhile the Nationalists realize that the ultimate issue lies between them and the Communists, and that even the suppression of factious war-lords and the extirpation of the bandits would leave the grim problem of supremacy unsolved. The Kuomintang has already tried conclusions, and no less than twelve military expeditions have been launched on the Yangtze alone. In no sense can these drives be regarded as successful. Even where a Red force has been routed the victory has been indecisive, the rebels making good their escape into the hills. In cases where a Communist area has been occupied by Government troops the system has not been overthrown. The unfortunate peasants, their homes pillaged, their crops laid waste, have endured until the army has moved on, when once more the Soviet resettles. It is a distinguishing feature of Communism that their troops are well fed, regularly paid, and, wherever possible, properly equipped—mostly from Kuomintang sources. It is a capital offence for Soviet military units to demand tribute from the peasantry or interfere with the routine of civil life. This, in a country where soldier is almost synonymous with robbery and rapine, is significant.

The last drive in the spring of 1933 succeeded in rounding up some of the more important leaders and re-established Kuomintang rule in certain districts, but what the Government gained in one province they lost in another—

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defeated in Kiangsi, the Reds have re-formed in Szechuan. And the same process is likely to continue. The Reds, knowing every nook and cranny of the country, like the Highlanders of old, lead the Government troops into the interior and then retire to a local fastness where they cannot effectively be followed. Added to this, the ease with which they can at a moment resolve themselves into simple peasantry makes wholesale capture impossible. Moreover, the troops who oppose them, fundamentally disaffected by arrears of pay, are often only too ready to change sides. "No questions asked" is the Communist rule for recruits—"Join the army, and bring your rifle with you—that is all we want!"

Until I went up the Yangtze I had no idea of the extent, influence, and attraction of the Communist party. Feared by its opponents, served with unflinching loyalty by its members, from a military point of view there have been amazingly few turncoats. The faith has bitten deep in the vitals of the Yangtze provinces, and though the Government forces have succeeded in isolating Hankow from the Red area, only a stalemate has been achieved on the whole front.

Rumours of a Red advance continually punctuated our life at Hankow; a students' demonstration, a procession of coolies, would send up the news thermometers to fever height. Stories came in daily of Communist outrages and Government reprisals, and in every case the emotional excitation in the town had its repercussion in the adjoining countryside.

I went to one village, a pretty spot on a green hillside, where a particularly gruesome tragedy had taken place. The local feeling was intensely Nationalist and anti-Communist. The peasants had a horror of the Reds equal to anything inspired by their traditional demons. An actual spiritual conviction made them regard the Soviet as an evil thing, which, if admitted, would consume them body and soul. The dread was intensified by their proximity

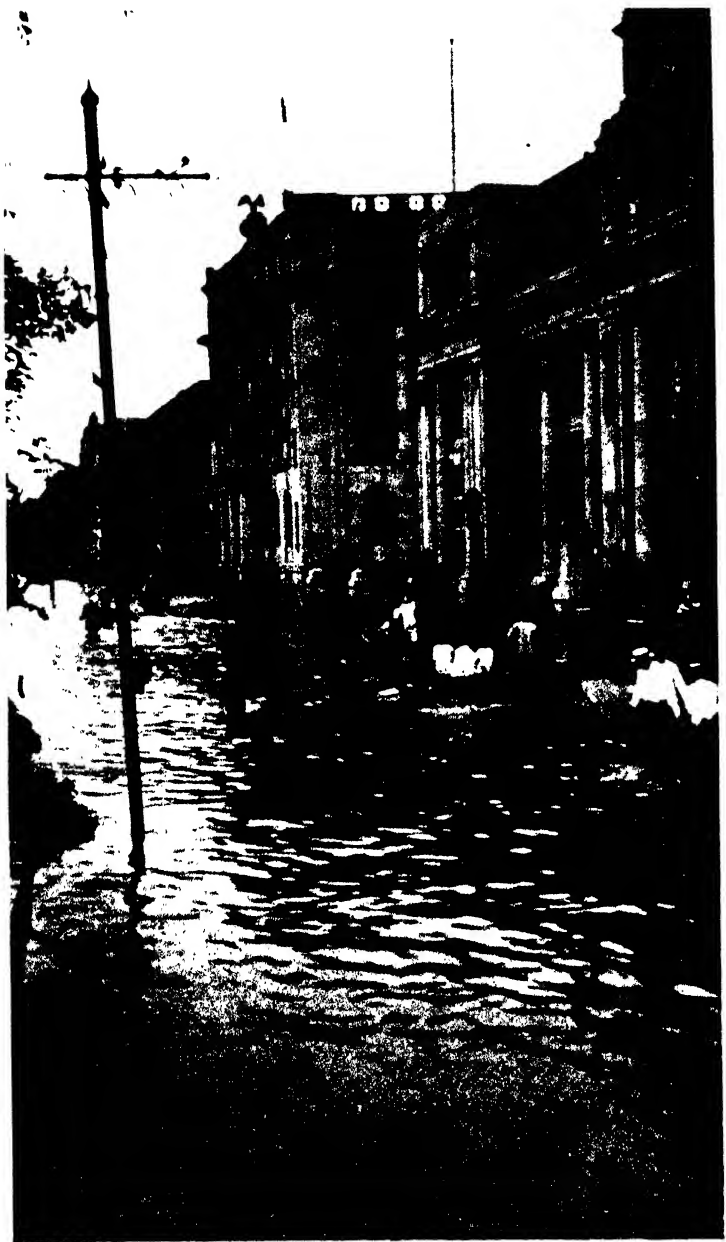
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to a Communist area—they felt they must erect a mental barrier, a kind of psychological devil step.

To this village came a young man from the Red district, desirous not to stir up strife or preach propaganda, but merely to see his wife and little boy, who were living with his parents. The poor girl welcomed him eagerly and ran to get food, but the father insisted that he must go—and instantly. If the neighbours heard he was in the house they would wreak vengeance on the whole family. But, pleaded the wife, the prodigal, faint and hungry, could not be turned adrift without chow and a bowl of tea. She begged so desperately that against his judgment the old man yielded; the son might stay to eat his rice—and then he must go. And even that short time was all too long. Before the unhappy husband had time to touch his food the neighbours were upon them—from the old father to the little child, they were all wiped out.

The same fierce and unqualified emotion blazes in the Communists. National training and inheritance inculcates restraint of feeling. Man should not be swayed by unruly passion and must not exhibit its reactions. But the external impassivity which veils the quick emotions of the Chinese goes by the board where the opponents or the supporters of Communism are concerned. Red terrors and White terrors of equal horror have burnt fear and intolerance into both sides.

Youth is largely attracted by the Soviet—students, professional men, craftsmen, and peasants respond in enormous numbers to its teaching. The detailed membership of Communist parties is difficult to obtain, but in round numbers the Communist population is computed as somewhere about eighty millions, extending over large areas. In certain districts where the persecution of Red tenets is intensive postulants have to give sureties of their loyalty. These are of a dreadful nature, comparable only to the price exacted by the Nationalists. Students, boys or girls, will be asked to kill their mother or father as proof of their



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unwavering loyalty to the cause. Such proofs are actually given; the enormity of the sacrifice can only be gauged by the remembrance of all that family signifies to the Chinese.

A white-hot flame of terror and unspeakable fidelity burns throughout the Yangtze provinces. Communism has become rooted in their life. And yet—so true is it that the East has cradled every idea that finds expression in the West—its philosophy, I find, is no new thing in China. One of the most revealing moments of my life was when Dr Francis Wei, the President of Wuchang University and a distinguished graduate of Oxford, told me that Communism had been established in the country a thousand years ago. Prime Minister Wong had then applied the principle to land-holding. The area of a district was divided into nine factors, the produce of the ninth being claimed by the State for road-making, the expenses of Government, and the support of the sick. The remaining eight fed and clothed the community which, through elected elders, was responsible for equitable division.

Neither Wong nor his twentieth-century successors seem to have tried to interfere with the unit of the family, nor is there any attempt to displace ancestral worship or religious observance of any kind. The social culture of China remains integrally the same under any or every economic or political system; only by the destruction of the country's fabric will it disappear.

Communism to me shares this quality with Christianity, that it takes many and different external forms. Soviet Russia has its particular manifestation and so has China, but though the economic principle remains the same its expression is widely different.

From Chin San we had gone back to the Bishop's house and were having tea in his study, which, in spite of Chinese carvings, still preserves the reticent distinction of a New England parlour. Dr Wei, a brilliant and fascinating talker, was discussing the future of his people.



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Himself a Christian, he believes that this form of faith has a stimulating effect on Young China. I listened with the greatest interest. Here I felt we touched fundamentals.

"The teachings of Confucius are ethical," said he. "They supply a complete direction as to conduct, but leave untouched the emotional springs. Buddhism in the ultimate does not stimulate action, but endurance. It is said, you know, that if a Westerner, an Indian, and a Chinese living together in a room were suddenly to find the rain coming in through a hole in the roof, the Westerner would mend it, the Indian sit under it, and the Chinese move to the other side of the room. I feel that Christianity would give us what the Buddhist and Confucian philosophies lack. It would furnish the motive power not to ignore, but to combat material ills, and at the same time engender an increase of spiritual life."

The industrialism of China was another topic. We all agreed that her exploitation by Western or Japanese capitalism would mean the replacing of the products of exquisite handicraft by standardized mechanism—a monstrous calamity that would cut at the roots of the Chinese ethos. But Dr Wei contended that without machinery and increased manufactures the standard of life among the peasants and workers could not be raised. The Bishop maintained that an extension of village industries and handicrafts throughout the countryside would meet increasing necessities and supply the means of exchange for the essential imports of machinery in which China is deficient.

Meanwhile the eternal query remained unanswered—where was the money for this field, farm, and factory system coming from? Kuomintang was always short of funds—it had only the salt tax and a percentage of the customs dues to draw upon, and the local bodies dependent on the land tax frequently found themselves forestalled by war-lords and bandit chiefs.

There remained, I felt, the Communist system, which

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by controlling prices and suppressing 'squeeze,' acquired sources of revenue unknown to other experimentalists. But I did not express my view; wisdom and the Church kept me silent!

From Communism we turned to Chiang Kai-shek, China's Commander-in-Chief. Beginning as a defender of Communism, he has become its relentless opponent in politics as in the field.

The next day I interviewed him.

## CHAPTER XIII

### YE HO—AND A RIDE IN A CHAIR

CHIANG KAI-SHEK is rapidly becoming a national legend. Romance clings round his name; his hairbreadth escapes and heroic actions afford unfailing inspiration to the professional story-tellers, who still hold audiences spellbound in the tea-house or the wine-shop. He has many palaces and opulent house-boats, and rumour credits him with estates in Italy and investments in America. He has, moreover, a great asset in his reputation for personal bravery in battle, which endears him to the people.

At Hankow he lives in a big farmhouse at a little village just outside the city. He is not keen on foreign correspondents and his wife arranges all his interviews. A very clever woman, she belongs to the Soong family, known to the irreverent as the Soong dynasty, which includes Soong Ting-ling, who married Sun Yat-sen; Soong Ai-ling, the wife of Dr Kung, a fabulously rich and cultured merchant; and Soong Mei-ling, the youngest, who married Chiang Kai-shek. The Soong brothers are all attached to the Kuomintang. T. V. Soong, Minister of Finance, and one of the ablest men in the country, has a strong belief in methods of Western administration and has adopted the Western fashion of nomenclature as distinct from the national. Chinese custom places the family name first, the personal second, and the generation name third—thus, Soong Ting-ling, *ling* being the *sobriquet* shared by the three sisters; but many now use Western sequence.

The entire family, educated in America, have joined

the Methodist persuasion and regularly attend chapel. Like the men, the Soong women play a considerable part in politics, though they remain traditionally the power behind the husband's throne. The widow of Sun Yat-sen, very beautiful and much loved, is a Communist in conviction. Her two sisters are strong Nationalists, but all of them wield a strong personal influence on their contemporaries.

Mei-ling was married in 1927 and from that moment became her husband's interpreter to Western thought and Western languages. A very pretty woman with an unconquerable youth, she wears the national costume, but runs her home in a Sino-American style which does not always mix.

My friend, the Colonel, fixed up for me to call at Ye Ho. The house, large and rambling, was covered with matting; flowers bloomed in a big garden which opened on to green fields and pleasant meadows. Soldiers in khaki uniforms were grouped in the courtyard, but we were escorted up the stairs by a house-boy in civilian dress.

Madame Chiang received us in a pleasant nondescript room where a Western tea was laid, with sudden exquisite national touches. American ice-cream and cakes, teacups and milk and sugar, and beside every plate minute and lovely floral chaplets made from the petals of sweet-smelling flowers—tuber-roses and magnolia. She speaks rapid and fluent American and is past-mistress in the art of pleasing conversation. Meanwhile, my eyes straying to the door, I watched expectant. And as I watched the highlights of the famous Chiang's career, the events that marked his history, passed like a swift film through my mind.

Originally one of Sun Yat-sen's *protégés*, Chiang was sent as his agent to Moscow. There—I seemed to see his lithe young figure flitting from group to group—he became acquainted with Michael Borodin, an organizing

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genius who at Sun's request came over to help the Nationalist Government, and eventually to establish himself as Communist governor of South China at Hankow. A clear thinker, a strong character with undoubted integrity of conviction, his understanding of Chinese psychology was extraordinary. He did not speak a word of the language, but with inborn capacity selected the most promising of his young followers for official positions.

Meanwhile Chiang remained Borodin's friend and waited his opportunity. The organizer of the Whampoa Military Academy, where cadets were trained on the Russian system not only in army but in propaganda methods, Chiang two years later became second in the Kuomintang military command. The death of Sun Yat-sen in 1925 left the Kuomintang in nominal, but Borodin in actual, control of the situation—and Chiang in command of the most effective fighting unit, the army of the South. After this things moved apace; the workers were organized to resist foreign capitalist methods, and in 1925 a general strike was declared in Shanghai and Hong Kong and a boycott of British goods proclaimed. Borodin had launched an offensive on Britain as the most powerful foreign interest; attack on the rest would follow. The movement spread, the long-endured slights and ignominies of the West became active in the Chinese memory, and in 1927 the Hankow people took the law into their own hands and, headed by workmen and students, attacked the British Concession; but owing to the marvellous restraint and discipline of our Marines, who reserved their fire, no lives were lost. A few weeks later events repeated themselves in Nanking. Here, however, it was not the people but the Communist troops who ran amok, looting the shops and beating up the foreigners. Even so, no great fatalities took place; five foreigners were killed and several wounded, and American and British gunboats shelled the town.

The Nanking affair turned the tide of Chinese opinion

against Borodin—and gave Chiang his chance. He approached the Nationalist party in Shanghai, who agreed to finance him, and at the head of his army he established a White terror in Hankow. Borodin eventually fled to Moscow and Chiang formed a Government in Nanking.

I wondered if in his farmhouse at Ye Ho he remembered those memorable days when not only military but state supremacy was in his grasp. But his reign was short-lived; the renewal of civil war with the North, his failure immediately to crush it, finally led to his retirement from Nanking and voluntary exile to Japan. His comeback later, in 1927, was staged for him. Marriage with Soong Mei-ling and his reappointment as Commander-in-Chief restored him to the limelight.

The door opened. A slender figure in a white silk robe, Chiang entered. Well-knit, with less of willow than steel in his frame, he has a small round head, and a beautifully moulded, slightly tragic mouth. His eyes are fluid and reflect the surface feeling of each moment; his voice is pleasant and lower pitched than the normal Chinese key. An interesting and magnetic character, Chiang has undoubted capacity and is a driving force in the field; but a great personality with the brain or the vision or the will of a ruler who, able to force events to his bidding, creates his own throne, in my opinion he is not. He might have seized supreme power in 1927, but some flaw in his purpose balked him. It may be that his chance will come again, that Young China, tired of internecine disaffection, may call on Chiang to unite the country in a despotism cruel and unflinching. His reputation includes a ruthlessness which strikes on mere suspicion. He has slain, deposed, imprisoned friends and enemies with curious impartiality, and only the devil's luck and his own audacity have saved him time and again from reprisals. But, whatever his future, to me he lacks that power of impressing the imagination which surmounts all differences of nation, creed, and language.

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After tea we adjourned to the great man's study. An American reporter had joined the party, and we fired our questions off alternately. Manchuria was the American's objective. But here he drew blank—Chiang had no views but the Kuomintang's. On the question of Communism he was more communicative. He was launching yet another offensive, he told me, which would round up the Reds in the adjoining provinces of Houpei and Anhwei. He was also hopeful as to the suppression of bandits and enthusiastic over growing trees. I was beginning to get tired of these perpetually recurrent trees!

His secretary and the Colonel acted as interpreters, until an awkward point in relation to Japan suddenly brought Madame on to the scene. She had, I feel sure, kept a diplomatic eye on the proceedings, for she took the discussion right out of everybody's hands and referred us once more to the Kuomintang. Madame has no children and is Chiang's third wife. The other two, however, in deference to her Western conventions, no longer form part of the household; the General visits them in their own establishments. Gossip—there is plenty in China—says that Madame's immediate predecessor, the prettiest thing imaginable and the mother of a son, has returned to China, after a sojourn in the States, with a brand new University degree, an American accent, and an exhausting familiarity with economics! These she displays in gentle rivalry with the new wife, but—alas for the ingratitude of man!—the General does not appreciate these distinctions, but steals away when possible to his first, a little singing-girl from Soo-chow, who knows only about love!

Madame Chiang is a cosmopolitan hostess, and invitations to her river-parties are eagerly accepted by Westerners and nationals alike. She has a shrewd brain and could establish a public reputation as a speaker, a writer, and organizer of women's political groups. But she prefers to suit her ambition to her husband's, declines to

be interviewed, and refuses her photographs—even to American papers.

It was at dinner that evening that I heard a first-hand account of the Concessions business. My informant was connected with the Chinese Customs, has lived up the Yangtze for many years, and knows the internal history of Anglo-Chinese relations.

"The outbreak of 1927," said he, "was the culmination of anti-foreign feeling due to the increasing national consciousness of China and the teaching of Communism. When the attack came, it was a choice between firing on the crowd, and killing hundreds of unarmed men and women, and evacuating the Concession. I am glad to say we chose the latter. Had the Marines opened fire the whole town might have been sacked, and both Britishers and Americans killed and wounded. As it was, though our women were frightened and upset they left Hankow in perfect safety.

"It was a horrible ordeal, I admit; a shrieking mob spat in our women's faces, and shouted execrations as they passed through the streets to the Bund and the safety of British ships. But the fact remains that if we had taken reprisals hostilities would have spread, and once again unarmed and innocent Chinese would have paid the penalty. Subsequently the Foreign Office decided to cede China both the Hankow and the other Yangtze Concessions, and though the Shanghai mind cannot see the justice of the action and the people at home and abroad declared it was a complete let-down of our prestige, here in Hankow those who know the facts are agreed it was inevitable. If we had not returned the Concessions we should have had to hold them by force. There's been enough force in our relations with China. They appreciated what we did—witness the Chinese dedication-stone in the old Concession to Britain's great Act of Friendship."

Bloodshed or just renunciation, it seemed to me that there could be no choice!



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"You see," he went on, "China has always resented her enforced admission of foreigners and foreign trade, for which we were primarily responsible. That, you may say, was inevitable; economically speaking, a country cannot live to itself alone. But the question of the Concessions was acute—we simply had to resign them or make war.

"There are still the fundamental grievances against us," he continued. "The matter of extra-territoriality, which sets a foreigner outside Chinese law and amenable only to courts set up by his own country, cuts deep at their sovereign rights. Japan has got rid of all that business, and China naturally wants equal consideration. The other point concerns the secret arrangement made between Britain and Japan as a price of the latter's assistance during the Great War, when it was agreed not only that the German rights in Shantung should be made over to Japan, but that the infamous 1915 Treaty of Twenty-one Points, which practically made China a vassal to Japan, should not be opposed. Under military threats China through her President Yuan Shi-ki had to agree, though with certain modifications. But Britain's betrayal—China was one of her allies at that time—has never been forgotten."

"And the future?" I asked. "Are Anglo-Chinese relations really improving?"

He said like Stirling Fessenden that our work on flood relief through Sir John Hope Simpson had helped immensely, and he confirmed what my experiences had already shown me, that individually the Chinese have a genuine liking for the British and a respect.

There was still one aspect of national enterprise that I wanted to explore in the Hankow district, and that was Chinese industrialism. In Wuchang, on the south side of the river, are some of the largest cotton-mills in the country. The particular group I selected, employing ten thousand operatives, are owned by Chinese capital and

run under Chinese management with a technical adviser from Lancashire. It was refreshing to hear his friendly Oldham accent. The machinery also was from his native town and indeed the whole aspect of the shops transported me to that kindly and familiar place. The ventilation was excellent. Even in that hot-house atmosphere I felt a current of air; there were guards round the machines, and slim-fingered operatives manipulated the bobbins with the careless ease of the Lancashire lass. The machine-minders included numbers of small children, but only a few babies were on view. The Company has built large tenements close to the mills, and infant members of the family left under an aged granddam's care are either fed at midday at home or brought to the mill. The tenements, built on a Western plan, have electric light and a water system. The Yangtsze, purified by modern processes, feeds gigantic cisterns from which pipes are run to each block, which has its individual tap.

I have seen cotton-mills in many countries, and Wuchang is well up to scale. But what interested me most were the Chinese slogans hung up in every shop and weaving-shed. All on the same note, they spurred the workers to patriotic activity:

If we make good cloth, we need not buy  
enemy cloth.  
Let us make good cloth.  
Work for China!

I was told that the output had considerably increased under the stimulus of these incentives, further reinforced by prizes and bonuses for individual products and team work. The cloth at the Wuchang mills is fairly coarse—Lancashire still holds her own in the finer counts—and made to suit the national taste, in blue and white, with red for ceremonials—funerals or weddings.

Handweaving still goes on in the interior, but on a diminishing scale, and if the Chinese cotton industry can

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capture and hold their home markets, national prosperity will automatically increase—if internal peace can be established.

In the Chinese towns even where internationalism has not permeated No. 1 factories are fairly up to standard; below that level they are increasingly ill-built and unsanitated until they reach the small and densely overcrowded shops, where carpet-weaving, embroidery, and shoemaking are carried on. There is little to choose on the whole between any of the No. 1 mills and factories, Chinese or international. In so far as foreign capitalism goes it has made, I should say, for improved methods in national industrialization. This, however, does not mitigate the evil of mass production in a nation of individual craftsmen—peasants and city-dwellers alike.

I returned to the hotel that night with the feeling that the day's experiences had brought into focus many of the conflicting factors of Chinese life. I remembered, as Wing trotted me through the crowded streets, that however deep her exterior rents China's social culture, like a skin, forms anew over the injured tissue. The hotel was nicely cool, the Chinese reception clerk insisted I must have iced water. I was conscious of the atmosphere of a thousand kindly things.

Upstairs I discovered a little tailor who, with other odd jobs, had made me a linen hat. He bowed politely and pointed to my head.

"Missy likee hat," I said, "topside."

Now the Chinese, though they like appreciation, never look for fulsome thanks. He had delivered the goods, been paid for them—his arrival at ten o'clock at night seemed uncalled for.

"Missy have hat?" he asked anxiously.

"Yes," I repeated, and took it off.

His face paled distressfully, he looked at the table, on the armchair.

"Hat?" he repeated desperately, and finding I simply

could not gather what he wished to say, went to fetch the house-boy, who started operations all over again, finally firmly but courteously pointing to the wardrobe.

"Missy put hat?" he asked.

"Why, yes," I answered. "Missy's hats all the same go sleep," and I indicated the shelf. He pounced upon it suddenly and from under a heap of headgear plucked forth a linen hat which I vaguely remembered having seen the day before. But before I could explain that it was not mine the tailor with a beatific smile had clasped it, and with a profound bow took it away. The mystery dawned on me. The little man had brought an order duly finished with mine, and all unconsciously I had annexed it. But etiquette forbade that I should be crudely informed of what I had done. I should lose a perfectly dreadful amount of face if I were told I'd *taken* the poor tailor's hat! Only by diplomatic declaration could the fact be allowed to dawn upon me. I realized that the unfortunate man had been waiting for six hours, where a Westerner would have telephoned within three minutes! Blessed is Chinese courtesy! Indeed, to me the process of face-saving is so commendable that I have brought it back home!

Later that same evening I learnt that Bunny was really better. The sister was tenderly sympathetic, the *amah* clapped her hands, even the Ancient Mariner beamed with a kindlier eye. She could, I was told, travel within the next few days. The relief was so great that next morning I went to the Chinese city and bought some gorgeous brocade for a pair of shoes!

I had always promised myself a trip up the Yangtze Gorges, where, enclosed by overhanging rocks, which tower monstrously high, the river narrows at moments to a slim channel. But the Ancient Mariner, bless him, insisted that Bunny must go quietly for a fortnight at least, and travel straight from hospital to Kuling, where the nights were cool beyond remembrance. The Bishop fixed

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up rooms for us, and "Taikoo" booked our passages on the river-steamer *Kiang*, but before we left I went again and again up my beloved Han, trekked to villages in the interior, and visited some pitiable and yet courageous mission settlements. Of these the most memorable is run by the Catholic sisters of the Canossian Order. It is a colony for orphans, old women, and those who are incurably afflicted. In a sunny courtyard that suggested Florence rather than the Yangtze every kind of physical deformity was gathered. Elephantiasis in its earliest and most advanced stages, goitre in its most dreadful form, twisted faces, incredibly knotted limbs, cancer, hydrocephalus, men and women under a sentence that the greatest skill, the tenderest care, could not defeat. But, as ever, the patient dignity of the Chinese adapted itself to these inhuman exigencies. There was no grumbling, no rebellion; like the sisters, who from some unattainable source draw a constant supply of cheerful courage, they faced life with a strong serenity.

It was at moments like this that I realized the intense suffering that China endures. For these poor things were but an iota in the sum total of her physical wreckage. Here also, as to most missions, came poor mothers with babies starving for the food they cannot give them. Every day brings its toll, until the tide of misery must seem engulfing. But the little creatures grow up happy and strong. They stay with a foster-mother till they can toddle, when they come into the orphanage school and are taught to read and write their native tongue, to embroider, make shoes, and work at other needlecrafts indigenous to China.

"And when they grow up do they go into service as *amahs*?" I asked.

"Why, no," was the smiling answer. "They all get married. We always have an enormous waiting-list of would-be husbands. The fathers generally approach the Reverend Mother, who picks and chooses very carefully. Most of our girls are country-born and we follow the local

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custom which keeps the young couple apart till their wedding morning."

A small group of jolly little girls escorted me to the orphanage gates where the faithful Wing was waiting. We embarked on the *Kiang* late in the evening after a kindly send-off from our new-found friends. It was only a short journey to Kuling, but the heat and the overcrowding lengthened the distance to an eternity. Passengers, Western and Chinese, overlapped the decks and seemed to crowd right up to the cabin door, and I had the sensation of clinging on with an eyelash. We disembarked at Kiukiang to find ourselves confronted with Chinese soldiers on the search for dope! It looked as though we were likely to be held up for hours, if not days, but the appearance of "Taikoo's" representative cleared the way. He waved his visiting-card and the soldiers saluted and fell back. I have never found the card-trick fail in China! Quite probably the recipient will look at it upside down, but that does not and cannot invalidate its authority. He or she who has a card must be an honourable person—the thing goes without saying. China was the original home of the visiting-card, and in the old days the rank and wealth of an official were determined by the size of the paste-board. Vast red squares invited your presence at a wedding or indicated a funeral—he who had no card was inconsiderable and worthless! Thus ushered, we found the road open and were immediately claimed by the porter of the Kuling Hotel.

Oh, that preposterous and devastating journey! The mosquitoes bit, the sun raged, and we were bundled from omnibus to taxi, and taxi to omnibus, until, our heads buzzing, we were bumped out at the end of the first stage of the journey. From whence three thousand five hundred feet up we were transported in sedan-chairs. Six bearers were told off to each person—four to carry and two to relieve! The track, precipitous beyond description, was bounded on one side by a deep chasm, on the other huge,

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bleak cliffs rose in a sheer wall. The only thing to do was to sit tight and say nothing—even when the equipage threatened to stand upon its head. The bearers, in straw sandals, sure-footed as mountain ponies, were incredibly slender and tragically narrow-chested. One boy coughed so perpetually that it was difficult to remain quiescent, remembering that I weighed nine stone!

The poles of a chair are supported by bearers travelling in Indian file, two in front and two behind. The perpetual weight of the pole resting on alternate shoulders makes a deep furrow, terribly calloused and sometimes inflamed. Year after year, until consumption or enfeeblement counts them out, the bearers, like human ants, drag their daily load. For Kuling, even in the winter months, is a favourite resort and in the coldest weather the early morning sun has a refreshing warmth. But winter was far from us that day; I felt that Shadrach and his friends must have found their furnace comparatively comfortable compared with our condition. The heat, too much even for me, drenched our clothes with perspiration and then dried them, until like St Lawrence I wanted to cry out, "Turn me, for I am done this side!"

And turned I was, though not in that fashion. I was suddenly conscious that the spirit of harmony among my bearers was, to say the least of it, disturbed! The high-pitched voices were suddenly charged with anger; reproaches, recriminations passed over my head—the leader paused and screamed abuse at the second, who replied in kind. I gathered Number Two was not pulling his weight, or rather mine, and presently from behind one of the spare parts rushed forward and wrenched him from the shaft. The change of balance swung the whole thing round—the shaft was actually over the precipice, at any moment the chair and I might follow suit. I felt that my last minute on this earth had come. Bunny, far up on the hill, was beyond farewell—there was nothing to do but to save face and crash becomingly. And then, swiftly

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as it had arisen, the hubbub died down. The chair, snatched from the chasm's brink, was pulled into the straight, the recalcitrant bearer, paid his share of the hire, was incontinently dismissed, and we started off once more in the best of spirits. Up and up we went, the air growing visibly clearer, the heat abating, the sense of space, the freshness of the undergrowth that lapped the path, relaxed the nerves with a pleasant holiday suggestion.

The journey, lasting for three hours and a half, was only broken three times for a matter of two minutes, when the bearers drank mineral water at a rest-house on the mountain-side. Tea there was none, nor any boiling water, and in the absence of authenticated brands we dared not sample soda-water or lemonade. For, alas, the tourist trade inevitably breeds deceit! The stall-keepers at some rest-houses had learned to refill the labelled bottle with an inferior and possibly germ-infected substitute by the simple process of boring a hole in the bottom and filling it up with blown glass! We were parched beyond expression when at last we came in sight of the promised land. Above our heads was Chinatown in a tumble of houses; rising from a peak beyond were bungalows and waterfalls, trees and gardens, and, far below, crisp, dancing and insistent, the waters of the Child of the Sun!

It took us another three-quarters of an hour from that first glimpse—over some of the nastiest bits of the way, along a razor-edge flanked by brutish-looking rocks, down a childish flight of steps, along a fairly smooth road—to the gate of the hotel, which irrelevantly and absurdly called itself Fairy Glen!

The bearers left us, the long line of coolies, carrying the luggage on an immense bamboo pole, deposited our suitcases. And with their disappearance we said farewell to China and found ourselves in the United States, with a strong dash of provincial England. On a notice board in the grounds we read that a performance of the *Messiah*



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would take place in the Church Hall the following Thursday, where further lectures and meetings would be announced! American voices flooded the gardens, the dining-room, the whole structure of the hotel.

Uplift was in the air and in the soul, the springs of mission welled up from the ground.

Kuling is the product of American missionary hands. In a lovely situation, it was originally bare of trees, which, however, industriously planted in great numbers, took root and grew up in umbrageous masses of kindly shade. Flowers and shrubs and winding paths, miniature torrents, tennis grounds—all the social delights and impedimenta of a Western holiday resort are there. And when you tire of literary readings—Browning, I declare, was gravely discussed—and Handel, choir-meetings and the rest—Chinatown waits for your regard, indestructible in colour, vitality, and genial untidiness.

All the jaded, worn-out Yangtze residents flock up to Kuling—Chinese and Westerners alike. Missionaries and their wives and families go there for leave, professional men and diplomats, soldiers and Ministers, make it their headquarters in the deadly summer months.

Bunny revived as by magic in the fresh days and the cool nights. Moreover, the food, eminently American, included the most delicious salads, green vegetables, fruit, all home-grown in sanitated areas, free from the least suspicion of germ! To me it was almost a fantastic existence. Under chestnut-trees on the lawn women sat and knitted, discussed the previous Sunday's sermon, and the prospects of the Bible-meeting. Girls and boys swam and played tennis, husbands arrived for the week-ends—it was impossible to believe we were living in the middle of China.

Every one was charming. Mrs Roots and the Bishop took us under their wing and we were asked out to tea with layer-cakes of melting succulence and lemon cheese and all the sweets for which the States are famous. It was a

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delightful interlude and included a long tramp to a lovely lake amid the hills overlooking Red territory.

Two years before, Kuling residents had been evacuated by their national Consuls. British and American families had been hurried down the mountain path to the steamers on the Yangtze. But the Bishop and his wife, who were there at the time, had refused to budge. They stayed serene, untroubled, and never the ghost of a Communist troubled them.

It was at Kuling that I met a man who had been a prisoner in a Communist territory where for weeks he had lived. A member of the Lutheran Mission, he was a Norwegian of about thirty-five and, retiring in disposition, had made no fuss about his capture or his release. I wanted desperately to hear all he could tell me of his experiences, and, having with some trouble discovered his address, set out one evening to visit him. Now sedans are not plentiful in Kuling, but as the way was long and hilly we thankfully chartered the only one available and took turn and turn about, though the coolies would quite willingly have packed in both of us.

Kuling goes early to bed, and already the streets were deserted. The sun was setting, the moon had not yet risen, the curious silent darkness of the tropics suddenly descended. We were out in the open country; the feet of the bearers suddenly sounded stealthy, the trees rustled curiously. . . .

I leant out of the sedan, my nerves tingling with the sense of danger. A figure stepped into the middle of the road. I caught the gleam of a rifle-barrel, and a nasty tremor ran up my spine.

"Bunny," I said hoarsely, "I believe it's a hold-up."

## CHAPTER XIV

### “THE SHADOW STAYED NOT, BUT THE SPLENDOUR STAYS”

**B**ANDITS!” was our first thought, and we waited to be captured and robbed. But the armed gentleman apparently had no malevolent designs on us. He turned to the bearers and began to berate them, pointing to Bunny with evident surprise.

What had *she* done, we wondered, until the coolies motioned her to sit beside me in the chair. Then the situation dawned on us. We had been challenged by a Chinese policeman who felt that his country was losing face by permitting a foreign missy to walk because presumably the bearers declined to take two fares in the same sedan. We all got very friendly after this. Bunny, with smiles and bows, intimated her preference for walking; I produced the invaluable visiting-card and we all sorted ourselves out and started off again.

Our ex-prisoner lived in a lovely but terribly inaccessible spot up a winding track that led to a romantic hill. The last beams of the dying sun centred on the verandah where with his wife and daughter the man who had been captured by Communists received us. It was a curious setting; the darkness of the room seemed palpable while outside a queer crimson light from the sky focused the waiting figures with an eerie intensity. There was a hush over the place, broken only by the movement of the bearers waiting in the garden. We might, I felt, have been in the Red area itself, we were so utterly removed from Kuling's daily life.

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The story the missionary told us had a drama and a veracity that bit into the mind. A simple and devout man, he had never been mixed up in politics and what he had to say was derived from his personal experiences and observation.

“I was on vacation,” he commenced, “with my family in a bungalow some distance from here. A fellow-missionary and his wife were staying next door and we were all enjoying a delightful holiday. The bungalows are a good way from the village, but we had plenty of supplies and our coolies were good and attentive. There had been fighting in the vicinity and the Soviet troops had advanced some miles from their base in pursuit of the Kuomintang’s army. We did not know that they were in the neighbourhood, however, and our first intimation was the arrival of a squad of soldiers who marched into the bungalow and made us prisoners—we were taken straight out of the house without any luggage and that night were carried in chairs some thirty or forty miles, to a village on the borders of a Communist area. There we were greeted by a Mr Chen, a very cultured and charming person of about thirty-five who had been educated in Paris, Oxford, and Moscow. He examined me intelligently and politely.

“Was I an Imperialist?”

“No, a Republican.

“And a capitalist?”

“Impossible. I hadn’t a penny.

“How had I earned my living?”

“I told him truthfully that I had been brought up as a carpenter and that my friend had worked on a farm. That answered the question so far as suspicion went. Chen shook hands and agreed immediately to release our wives and families and despatch them to Hankow. As for us, he wished to retain our company not for purposes of ransom or ill-treatment, but in order that we might learn for ourselves just what happened under Communist rule.

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“ ‘You shall see everything and go everywhere,’ he said. ‘All I ask is that you will tell the truth about it all when you return home.’ ”

Now this, as I agreed, was most friendly and interesting, but Chen was not the only person concerned. His colleague Wong was a very different proposition. He had already commandeered the missionary's spectacles and those of his young son, on the plea that the Communist need was greater than theirs, but no complaints were made—our friend understood the art of saving face to a nicety—and subsequently another pair of glasses, quite wrongly sighted, were presented to him! His wife, however, did not accept the situation so calmly. She had already taken the precaution to conceal her watch and her wedding-ring about her person, and had protested strongly against the detention of her husband's property, but was finally borne off, still protesting, to the nearest railway-station with the children and her friend. The fares were paid and they were most politely and considerately treated.

“After they had gone,” said our host, “we had a curious experience. While Chen was on the spot everything went quite smoothly. But when Wong relieved guard, so to speak, life grew most unpleasant. He was for ever telling us his views on capitalism and how capitalists should be treated. Meanwhile we were carried farther and farther into the interior, sometimes covering more than fifty miles in a day. At last we made a halt and Chen took us in charge. We were shown the villages, the farms, and the general mode of living. The land, leased collectively to one or more of the clans, is worked under the direction of a head man, elected by the people concerned. The area of land allotted to each group is determined by the number of families it has to support. There is no attempt to break up individual households, but the overcrowding is not so dense as in other parts. The farms sell and buy produce quite freely, but the price

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of all commodities is regulated by the Central Soviet. I must say that all kinds of goods were much cheaper in that particular area than in Hankow or the adjoining villages.”

“And what about religion? Have they destroyed the temples?” I asked.

“Oh, no. There’s a strong anti-Christian bias, because many of the Chinese associate the faith with foreign oppression. But otherwise things are quite normal.”

“And what about the schools?”

“They seem to be going strong. The Students’ Party have started an educational crusade, and they teach in night schools all over the place. Thousands of young men and women, they are all intensely enthusiastic and keen. But our most amazing experience was one night when we arrived at a big town. We were put up in a modern building in a big courtyard where we all sat and gossiped. Presently a detachment of soldiers came in and started discussing future manœuvres. Their objective was a hill held by Government troops, and the attack was to start in a few days. ‘But,’ said one of them, ‘we don’t know yet who’s in command. We shall elect our leader this evening!’”

This plan, I felt, though eminently democratic, was hardly calculated to secure good strategy.

“Presently,” our host continued, “an old lady came downstairs and recognized a corporal. ‘Where’s my rolling-pin?’ she said. ‘You borrowed it last time you were here, a month ago—you son of a gun!’”

“The corporal meekly searched his kit, duly produced the rolling-pin, and everybody shouted applause. There’s one thing the Communists have done, anyway—stopped their men looting! The people welcome the lads instead of spitting at them.”

“You saw no cases of cruelty or oppression?” I asked.

“Not one. The people are really contented and fairly prosperous. They’re not raided by bandits nor squeezed

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by war-lords—that's one of the most remarkable things about the system. They've definitely got 'squeeze' in hand. Chen told me that it's a capital offence to bribe, and he warned me that if I or my colleague tipped our bearers they would be executed."

"Didn't you want to get away?" I asked.

"Sometimes we got the wind up, especially when Wong was on the job. One night Chen had a long talk with us and explained that there were two divergent influences at work. He and his party were in favour of holding the rich to ransom but ensuring them from loss of life or limb, and generally treating them decently, so that, as he said, even the rich might be converted. Wong and his lot believed in ransom all right, but also in the cutting off of ears and fingers and all the old fi-fo-fum stuff. Also Chen had faith in education and Wong clung to the sword; and the two contingents were always pulling one against the other. Chen spoke to us at length of his past. A student at Whampoa, Chiang Kai-shek's Military Academy, he had formed a hero-worship for his Chief which nothing had destroyed.

" 'When you see the General,' said he, 'tell him that if we meet in battle I shall expect no quarter, but that if he should fall into my hands no harm will come to him.'

"You know"—the missionary leaned forward impressively—"that is rather wonderful, but quite typically Chinese. They never forget first beginnings, the friends of their youth. Chen at this moment would lay down his life to save Chiang Kai-shek's. . . .

"We were told that the next day at sunrise we should start on our homeward journey. Great preparations were made, we were lent clean linen while our own was washed, and a hot bath was arranged. And then just as we were settling down to a quiet expectancy a messenger from Wong arrived! We were to be shot the following morning. Well, my friend confessed that he'd never really be-

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lieved we should escape alive, and I felt a bit downcast myself. But I believed in Chen and waited. No, it wasn't a nice night, and the first streak of dawn was mighty chilling. But Chen did not forsake us. He turned up with a company of soldiers who bundled us into chairs and escorted us and the bearers to the Soviet border-line. But before we left Chen gave us the money for our second-class fares to Hankow, and warned us once again not to give *cumsha* to the coolies. It was a great experience.”

“And you think Communism in China has come to stay?” I asked.

“I do. It will pass through phases of terror and cruelty, and the Wongs of the movement will triumph again and again. But I believe that in the ultimate the Chen gospel will prevail, and in huge areas peaceful, prosperous, and progressive communities will be established. No, I'm not a Communist by conviction, I only tell you what I've seen and heard myself.”

He paused. I was conscious that the last light had faded from the sky, that we were sitting in total darkness. From outside came a sudden clamour of hoarse voices. “Communists?” I asked breathlessly. But it was merely our bearers, tired and hungry, who were demonstrating their desire for a belated chow.

We went down to them hurriedly and packing into the sedan were borne lightly down-hill. But in the darkness and the silence of the hillside a little thrill ran through me. What if, quite suddenly, Mr Wong and his guards should appear?

We left the Fairy Glen Hotel next morning rested and keyed up to an anticipatory thrill. For we were on our way to the capital of old Cathay, that dream of loveliness Peking. We descended from Kuling at a quicker pace than we came up. Our bearers literally raced along, to speed back again immediately with a fresh fare. A dollar a head is the fixed price for a bearer, paid to the *compradore*, without whose sanction sedans cannot be



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secured. What percentage of this amount the men actually receive is unknown!

There are two routes from the Yangtsze to the North. We could take the train either from Hankow or from Nanking. The first though undoubtedly the nearer was impossible. Conditions of travel, food, sleeping arrangements, etc., were such that the Ancient Mariner would have shuddered on behalf of his patient, added to which the line was continually being cut by bandits and others of that ilk so that there was no knowing at what stage of the journey we might find ourselves marooned. It was necessary therefore to return to Nanking, where the service was better, and accordingly we embarked on the *Wuhu* voyaging down the Yangtsze.

The Captain was a marvellous person of many languages and vast conversational powers. He had a passion for China which extended to her people, one of whom at a tender age he had adopted. Unfortunately he forgot that by so doing he had accepted the responsibility for the upkeep of the lad's parents, his cousins, and his aunts, all of whom quartered themselves upon him. Prolonged legal arrangements and considerable financial loss finally relieved him of excess family obligations and the return of the adoptee, when he immediately took on the care of a fresh charge. In this case, however, the boy was an orphan, so all was well. He adored the Captain, who regarded him as China's future hope, and he travelled on the boat at every available holiday.

Our first day was delightfully mad. The Captain invited us to a very special chow, to be served somewhere about eight, after the ship's dinner. We were told of the number and succulence of the dishes in preparation by an amazing person who after fifty years in China could not be happy anywhere else. He had tried to retire twice, on both occasions returning to England, but never had he been able to find contentment.

"You cannot think," he said, "how dreadfully home-

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sick I was for Chinese food, Chinese customs—and the Chinese. I remember once I felt I should go mad in my suburban home with a truly British beefsteak, and I rushed up to town to a Chinese restaurant and ordered chow. But the fools could not understand the language nor cook the food. The restaurant-keeper was three generations from his native country and the result was dreadful.”

He sailed for China that night and has never been to England since!

He was purser on the *Wuhu* and full of the most astonishing anecdotes of people and places on the river. He spoke not only Mandarin but Cantonese, and was able to exchange jokes with the Chinese passengers in a variety of dialects. He knew all the street sellers' chants and wonderful old Chinese songs. A great source of entertainment, he is a positive asset to the company.

Meanwhile we were getting hungry, but no chow was forthcoming until at long last a table, duly set, made its appearance. The Captain inspected its position and decided it was too hot—it must be moved to leeward and catch a cool breeze. But by the time it was shifted he was wanted on the bridge and when he was free the wind had veered again and the table had to be removed once more. Round and round we went, until at last we came to a final anchor, and a vast succession of dainties were served up. Crab, prawns, fish of great variety with new sauces and exotic vegetables, and a delicately flavoured *samsu* topped up the feast, which we sat late discussing. Once again the panorama of the river unrolled before me, friendly and familiar in the light of remembrance, low-lying villages, Chinese towns ablaze with electricity—in all the pride and delight of a man with a mechanical toy.

The purser told us of the national holidays—the Feast of Dragons, when boats with figureheads of fire-eating monsters, winged creatures beautiful and fierce, are

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launched on every stream and rivulet. At night the dragon boats are lit with lanterns exquisitely fashioned, beautifully coloured. It was, however, past the Dragon season. The next in rotation was the Feast of Lanterns!

Our voyage was all too short. The spell of the Yangtze is not easily foregone, and I was sorry when at last the old pontoon at Nanking came in sight. The few hours between our arrival and the train's departure we spent with our kind friends the Campbells, who arranged our tickets and took us to the station the other side of the river.

The train was European in equipment, with luxurious *wagon-lits* and first-class cooking. The steward was a White Russian, who looked after us most kindly. I have heard many complaints of the Nanking-Peking Railway. Comparisons, to its detriment, are repeatedly made with the Japanese lines, but we experienced the greatest comfort, cleanliness, and attention.

The heat was fierce, the dust prodigious, but electric fans and brushes minimized the pains of both, and the meals—chicken, curry, ice-cream, and coffee—were very tempting. The only drawback, apart from the inevitable monotony of three days and three nights on the rails, was a succession of violent thunderstorms and most terrific cloudbursts.

There is something very curious about Chinese thunder. The peals do not rumble and reverberate, but starting with a stupendous impact break into a syncopated beat. One long, one short, it sounds like a lame man—Nemesis seems actually in pursuit. It has a quality of witchcraft somehow; lacking the grandeur of that continuous concatenation that thrills us at home with its remoteness, each report has a horrible nearness as though vengeance stood at your elbow. The rain descended in waves, the heavens seemed to open and pour out the accumulations of eternity. In the night the air chilled—we were continents away from the Yangtze.

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Between the storms we watched the countryside. Gone were the familiar *padi*-fields, the deep waterways, and tiny streams of South China. Vast plains rolled to the skyline, planted thickly with wheat, millet, and cattle food, known as *gowlan*, which grows to the height of a man. Here the country without canals or any form of irrigation suffers from long periods of drought, when the inhabitants after the ancient custom turn bandit, recruiting stray hordes of robbers.

Here also we saw occasional oxen, which with a small breed of horse displace the water-buffalo. Now and again the flat landscape was broken by a range of hills, impressive and aloof. North China, viewed from the train, lacks the intimacy of the Southern states; but the villages remain unaltered. Behind the walls farmhouses and cottages, huts of mud and bamboo—all of them overflowing with humanity—bear witness to the unvarying unit of Chinese existence.

The people as we got farther North, beyond the Yellow River, changed in stature and physiognomy. The men were tall, with broad shoulders, wide chests; their faces kind and serious lacked the nervous quickness of the South; their movements were slower, their reactions less immediate. But their humour was as fundamental, their manners as delightful. The live, swift-stepping, almost dancing figures of the Yangtze people had evoked no traditional memories in my mind. The Northerners brought back recollections of old pictures, books of fairy-stories, where amazing mandarins in pomp and panoply sat on dragon thrones and malefactors were exhibited in dreadful cages.

Towards Tientsin we ran into deep water. Alas, poor China, she is for ever in extremes of aridity or flood! The train travelled axle-deep over submerged meadows until we arrived midday at the port. A busy, thriving city, it includes a large British Concession which has now become practically an International Settlement, admirably run

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under a municipal council. Foreigners and Chinese alike enjoy security. The banks are the repository of national wealth to a vast extent, for here the mandate of bandit chief or local war-lord does not run, and whereas outside the Settlement a bank may be called upon to deliver thousands of taels or run the risk of being looted, in Tientsin such irregularities are not known.

We got into Peking just after noon. The station, well kept and businesslike, was very active. The line, built on British capital and originally under British management, is now controlled by the Chinese, who, however, keep arrangements as to rolling-stock well up to standard. We had been recommended to the Wagon-Lits Hotel, to which the porter, duly collecting us and our luggage, escorted us. The Peking prices are quite reasonable, though the three tariffs still remain. As students we could have fixed up for six dollars each per day; as all-in boarders we were received for nine.

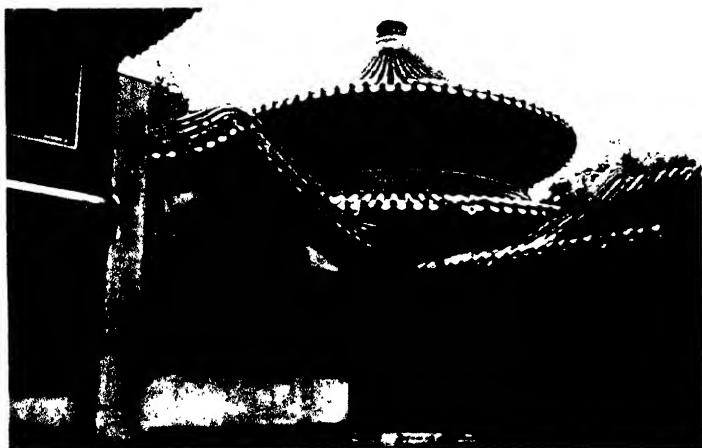
We had a pleasant room with bath attached, electric light, and all the international comforts, and after lunch our first care was to get some money at the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank. Here we met again the currency question. Our Hankow and Nanking notes were not legal tender, and on the rate of exchange we lost every time.

It was in the courtyard of the bank that Bunny and I found ourselves most firmly but very courteously adopted. The usual flurry of rickshas awaited us, but before we could choose from the crowd a tall, well-built coolie rushed forward and informed us he could speak good English—which he did—and before I knew what was happening Hsu had me ensconced in his chair. Meanwhile his good friend Wong had been equally busy with Bunny, and to the annoyance of the rest they pulled us along in triumph. Hsu had the most perfect manners and the most beautiful hands. He suggested that he and Wong—who knew but little English, though earnestly improv-



"MIRACLE OF TOWN-PLANNING"

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"ROOFS WITH GREEN AND YELLOW TILES"

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WONG AND HSI

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PEKING'S IMPERIAL GATEWAYS

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ing—would be pleased to accept one dollar fifty cents each per day, which would include not only the rickshas, but personal services as guides. We closed on the offer forthwith, and never did we make a more satisfactory bargain.

That afternoon we called at the British Legation and explored the quarter generally. Our national headquarters are quite beautiful. Built on traditional Chinese lines, the gracious sloping roofs, the painted fronts, the spacious courtyard, make a picture of gracious memory. The other Legations, mostly of Chinese architecture also, stand in big gardens leafy with chestnut-trees, gay with wisteria and iris.

The shops are *chic*; in Marco Polo Street—the name is a thrill—you find beauty-parlours, hairdressers, French milliners, and jewellers who display incredibly lovely jade and luscious rose-quartz in their windows. The hotels provide dance-floors and excellent bands, and the diplomatic representatives give lunches and dinners, which the residents return. Bridge and *mah-jong* parties are of the social routine, and private tennis-grounds and bathing-pools abound. The Quarter, however, has other uses. Within its huge and formidable walls are the barracks of every national represented, ready at the hint of a spot of bother from without to line up in defence of their people. Notices of evacuation to all Western residents outside the Quarter are issued by the respective Consuls, and all the timorous and obedient flock inside. Every one was on the tiptoe of anticipation when we arrived, ready and waiting for evacuation notices—the Japanese were even then expected at Peking.

The Lytton Report was not yet published, but public opinion did not attach much material importance to the findings of the Commission either way, for the Japanese were then planning their descent on Jehol and intensive friction between the Chinese and the Manchukuo Post Offices had held up the mails already delayed by



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floods. Lord Lytton himself was in the Peking German hospital, suffering, it was said, from food poisoning during his stay in Tokyo.

The actual date of the Japanese invasion was discussed—August 13th being chosen; nor need this be regarded as fantastic. That Japan would remain satisfied with Manchukuo or Jehol was not within the region of practical politics. Her designs on North China were apparent to every student of Eastern affairs as far back as the Great War, her ultimate plans including the absorption of territory down to the Yellow Sea. Whether she would have the Japanese Emperor himself crowned or restore Pu Yi to his Manchu throne might be a matter of argument. The objective of Japan was a foregone conclusion.

It was, I think, Japan's original intention to precipitate a situation in Peking similar to the Chapei affair, which would have supplied an excuse for the movements of her troops outside Manchukuo. This, indeed, was the opinion of both Chinese and Westerners following an incident early in August.

It was past midnight and within the Legation Quarter all was silent. Bunny and I, comfortably asleep, were awakened by the tramp of armed men, the rattle of guns, all the paraphernalia and terror of war.

"They've come!" we said, and sat up with beating hearts. It seemed certain that the Japanese had invaded the city.

In the morning, after a night of considerable suspense, we learnt just what had happened. The Japanese Military Command had decided to send their troops on midnight manoeuvres, completely ignoring the custom observed by every national, that on such occasions the Chinese authorities should be informed of what was taking place, together with the rest of the Consuls. In the tense state of the city this unexpected appearance of an armed force might quite reasonably have evoked an incident such as

## "THE SHADOW STAYED NOT"

occurred in Shanghai and have given an excuse for the Japs to open fire. But the North is less excitable, and though the market-places in the Chinese city were still crowded and hundreds of students and workers were about, the people refused to be precipitated into action. And the Japanese lost face!

Peking has seen too much of war easily to lose her nerve. Time and again she has been ravished, pillaged, and beset. In 1927 the Cantonese troops, under General Feng, marched into the capital, broke up some of the loveliest temples, and in compliance with his new-found Christian zeal smashed the exquisite little Buddhas which decorate the Winter Palace. The Westerners expected fire and slaughter, but the Chinese kept their heads.

A woman who rents one of the lovely Chinese houses which lie outside the Legation Quarter told me of her experiences on that occasion.

"We were all in a dreadful state of apprehension, expecting any moment notice of evacuation. One never knows what to take or leave behind on these occasions. You may come back to find all your possessions gone, but on the other hand you always have to travel light. In despair I went to my house-boy. 'Ho Ling,' said I, 'what's going to happen to the house? We've got to leave it.'

"'I look after house, missy,' he said, with a beautiful bow.

"'Yes, but I may not be able to get any money to you'—you see, I pictured the streets running red with blood. 'What will you do then?' I asked.

"Ho looked at me with calm, untroubled eyes.

"'I pay rent for forty years, missy,' he replied calmly. 'You come look-see before then, all the same here.'

"And I knew he would do just as he said, and carry on whatever happened. The Chinese are like that, you know," she added.

Efficient and devoted elsewhere, in Peking your house-

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boy is a pearl of price. Not only in the home but in the hotel is Number One a guardian angel. Your clothes are unpacked, your drawers tidied, your shoes kept in perfect repair. Hotel dining-room staffs wear gorgeously embroidered sleeveless jackets over their white gowns. Tall, well-made, there is something imperial in the carriage of the Peking men.

But the beauty and the haunting tenderness which is the city lies beyond the Legation Quarter. We were not yet to explore its attractions, however. My poor Bunny developed a return of dysentery and we had to trundle off to the P.U.M.C.—which being interpreted signifies the hospital founded and equipped by the Rockefeller Trust, staffed by Americans and Chinese, for international patients.

We were interviewed by a young Chinese doctor who spoke English very well and sized up my friend within two minutes. We departed with a prescription which set everything right and earned our lasting gratitude.

The hospital with its wonderful green-tiled roof is most expensively established, with the most modern appliances. It is a School of Medicine into the bargain and grants medical degrees, but for the most part Chinese surgeons and doctors qualify abroad. Peking has other hospitals, of which the most famous is the German, but P.U.M.C. remains a favourite with the Chinese both in official and private circles.

It is said that on one occasion, when a military dignitary came in for an operation, his staff were so appreciative of the gadgets in the way of bathroom fitments that they removed all the taps and lavatory basins from his suite to re-establish them in his own palace!

But though desire for Westernism has affected the city as well as the hospital it has not touched that innate personality which throughout all her sufferings Peking still preserves. Unlike Nanking she touches modernism lightly, gathering what appeals to her desires and aspirations, but

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so modifying what she takes that it blends almost unnoticed with her native serenity.

For the ancient capital has a secret of which she cannot be dispossessed.

## CHAPTER XV

### PEKING—THE WELL-BELOVED

PEKING to me has the haunting charm of a beauty that survives all external assault. Her Imperial gateways springing towards the sky, her lovely arches, though battered by alien hordes, show no gaping rents nor ugly fissures; time has healed them with a soft kindliness that shows no hurt. Her wide roads that have run with blood are still gracious; charming little streets thread the city like a stream of gems—Jade Street, Ivory, Embroidery, Gold, Silver, Lantern, Flower, Incense—all of them encrusted with old and tiny shops that carry on the trade by which they are named. Through hundreds of years artificers have sat in the open fronts carving ivory figures, beating out silver bracelets rich with dragons, lotus-flowers, the phoenix, and the ibex; men have sold candles moulded to incredibly perfect patterns in dark places fragrant with generations of incense, dim with the memories of the weddings and funerals the red ceremonial wares have decorated. Jade Street has its limpid necklaces, its small gem-like treasures, fragments of Manchu headdresses of kingfisher feathers blue as the rarest turquoise, glossy as the finest enamel; lucky rings embossed with a frog, a bamboo-shoot, and a bat; brooches of filigree finer than the best Italian work; fans of incomparable design in silk or paper; curious locketts to hold powdered flowers; chopsticks exquisitely wrought. To wander through the maze of these immemorial alleys is to savour the traditions and the art that has made Peking the treasure-house of all the East.

## PEKING—THE WELL-BELOVED

It was on an afternoon of flaming summer that I first saw the Forbidden City. Like the ivory ball of national craftsmanship which holds innumerable other balls, each separately carved but indissolubly enveloped by the rest, so is the Forbidden enwrapped within the Imperial, the Tartar, and the Chinese cities. The last and final barrier between the Manchu Emperor and the people he ruled was the moat. It is still there, but the drawbridge, once closely guarded, now lies open, and where a Chinese dignitary could not set foot without permission upon pain of death, the ricksha-coolie can enter gaily without question. The huge courtyards that used to bristle with armed bands are open to the townsfolk; small children and old men gaze at the bronze statues, giant incense-burners that overlook the marble devil bridges, the wide steps, the carved panels down which long dragons slither; the palaces with their Throne Rooms and Banquet Halls, the sleeping and the living quarters that were wont to blaze with pomp and splendour, are empty save for a few treasures, relics of the fabulous wealth, the sheer magnificence of the old days. But above the pleasant hum of to-day, the panoplied memory of yesterday, the roofs of the Forbidden City rise in a beauty of serenity that is untouchable; their yellow and green tiles glistening in the sun, they rear proud heads in a miracle of town-planning.

Will the Forbidden City ever again house a Son of Heaven? It was whispered that soon an Emperor might once more sit upon the dragon throne; and all the lackeys, the mercenaries, the panders, and the petty courtiers, the inevitable riff-raff of a Court on which they had battened but two decades ago, fastened on the thought.

Hsu left me at the palace gates, where I was handed over to an aged and impassive guide, who in pidgin English told me of the Dowager Empress. To the day she died this marvellous woman preserved her soft un-

wrinkled skin and baby-like complexion. But for her, he said, his face suddenly flaming into life, but for her the Manchus would still be in Peking. The Emperor, her nephew Kuang Hsu, whom she had put on the throne, had a mind to institute government reforms—the suppression of corruption and the financial bleeding of the peasants; the Dowager Yehonala, however, took alarm at his liberal views, and by a *coup d'état* in 1898 put him under restraint, and would undoubtedly have murdered him had he not made his escape. With him went all the hopes of a China regenerated from within by her own philosophy; and the way for Sun Yat-sen was prepared.

Over the courtyards and the palaces on that blazing afternoon circled soft downy clouds of pigeons. The Chinese, who adore these birds, fasten a wooden whistle under the right wing; each whistle has a different note, so that as the flocks fly overhead low strains of heavenly music fall on the air. It is a Peking enchantment.

Outside the Forbidden City lies a wonderland of palaces and temples, gardens and parks, markets that traded hundreds of years ago, the Tartar wall where still the camel-trains come from the Gobi Desert travelling leisurely and slow as they travelled in the Middle Ages, exquisite Ming gateways so perfectly proportioned that beside the architecture of those ancient Emperors the beauty of a later time seems coarsened. To go from that place of pageantry and dread, the Manchu stronghold, to the Central Park is to find another link between the past and to-day. Here are students in long white robes and straw hats, small boys in fantastic female dress, schoolgirls in European gymnasium costume, Chinese women in lovely silks and delicate brocades, jasmine in their hair, with fragile silk parasols gay as painted butterflies to shield their delicate skins from the sun, while beyond the Park lies the Central Museum, a modern building on traditional lines.

We went to the Winter Palace of the Manchus in joyous circumstances. Hsu by this time had constituted himself

Grand Vizier and general controller of our destinies. He took us to queer out-of-the-way shops kept by his 'good friends,' who were legion in number and most amenable.

"Do not offer price, missy," said he, "till I say how much. I tell that you and other missy belong Peking."

This meant that we were charged a considerably lower figure than ordinary visitors, and then, thanks to Hsu's business powers, less again! Sometimes his friends spoke English and we bargained direct, at others he translated, but either way we unearthed treasures at an amazingly cheap rate. And then, the purchase made, the silver dollars counted over, came the crowning ceremony of *cumsha*. In Peking the pleasing custom remains by which the dealer gives his client a souvenir of the transaction—a tiny charm, a piece of silk, a pair of scrolls, as earnest of friendly dealing and future prospects. Time does not exist, nobody hurries—the rush, the rattle of Shanghai is centuries away.

Now to reach the Winter and the Summer Palaces it is necessary to take a car. On Hsu's suggestion we inquired the price—some thirty dollars—whereat he told us confidentially he could arrange the trip for ten dollars less. But the car would meet us at the garage, where he and Wong took us in rickshas. It had been decided that Hsu should act as our guide, but as I had discovered a ricksha-coolie in vest and shorts is not allowed to play the *cicerone*, being shooed off by the appointed custodian, what, we wondered, would he do?

We need not have worried. After a short interval at the garage, Hsu returned clad in the long white robe of the *intelligentzia*, with smart shoes on his feet and a calm smile on his face. He bowed, we bowed, and, taking his seat by the driver, he left the ricksha-coolie far behind and became our cultured escort!

The Summer Palace, built by the Dowager Yehonala to replace the exquisite retreat destroyed in 1900 by the Allies, has little of Peking magic. The long verandahs of



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worn paint, windswept and rain-bedabbled, which in their prime may have been bright and coquettish, have now a touch of sordid tragedy. It is the difference between old beauty which retains its perfect line and the cheap veneer which, once worn, reveals poverty of structure. The marble boat from which Yehonala used to survey her favourite domain is cumbersome and time-weathered, but legend has softened its rather crude appeal, for it is said that at the Feast of Lanterns, when for three days and nights the dead return to their earthly homes, the marble boat sails round the lake bearing a goodly company of Emperors, their wives and concubines.

But for the Winter Palace there are few words with colour and grace and dignity sufficient to describe it. The pagodas, with their rows of lovely little Buddhas cruelly defaced by the Cantonese, have taken to themselves that resigned loveliness which is peculiarly Peking's. For like an exquisite old tapestry, her wounds and scars blend with the texture, so that the rents are welded into a fragile, haunting appeal.

Peking has an allure that as you learn to know her deepens to a heartache. Her beauty draws and holds you, so that when, alas, you leave her, you long only for the moment of return; even her modern electric trams, embellished with decorative signs, fit into the pattern!

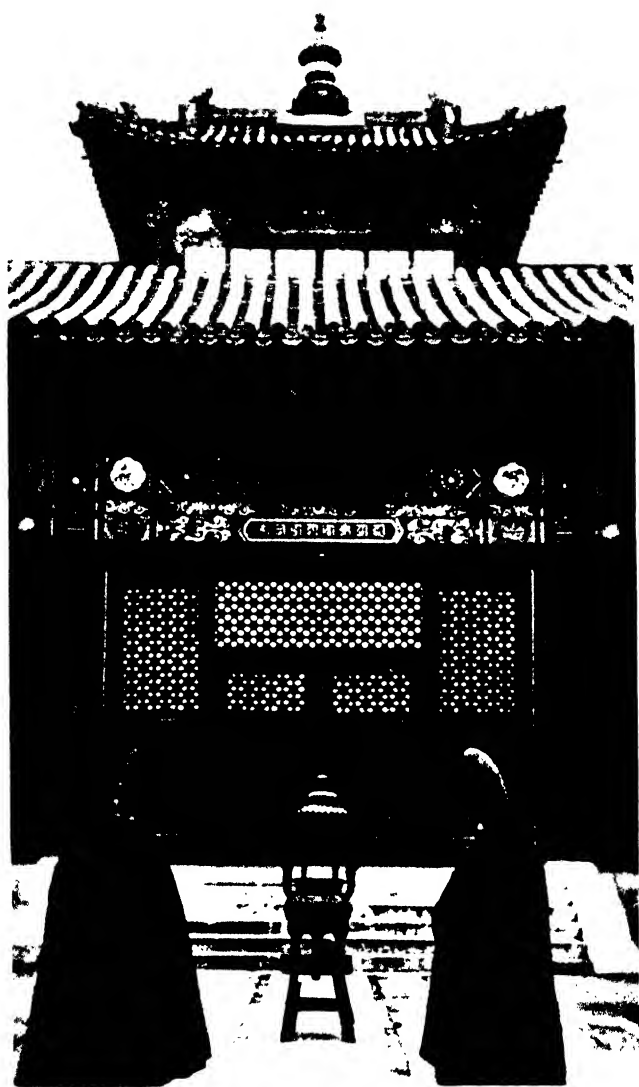
The screen of the nine dragons in yellow porcelain is perhaps the treasure of the Winter Palace I loved best. The winged creatures are alive in intensity and action; at any moment you feel they may fly into the air and bear you off.

After a long, delicious afternoon of lotus-lakes, slender pagodas, and imperishable dragons, we arrived back in the Legation quarters after sunset. Once more the question troubled us—how would Hsu of the white gown revert to Hsu of the shorts and vest? It was not possible he could allow himself so to demean his face! But he was more than equal to the occasion. He explained that the garage



THE NINE-DRAGON SCREEN

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RED LAMAS

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was a long way off and that it would be better if we all parted at a curio store which formed part of the hotel, but round a side turning was not visible from the main entrance.

"Missy walk through shop," he explained, "see many pretty things!" and so with a sweeping bow we parted from our friend, and next morning renewed acquaintance with the ricksha-coolie.

Hsu was a person of fine taste and strong family affection. He had a baby son and a young wife, and with amazing industry he had contrived in his scant leisure to exchange lessons with an Englishman employed in an hotel, who was willing to teach his language if Hsu would instruct him in Mandarin. Well grounded in his city's history he was never at fault in his facts.

The great temples of Peking have a grandeur and a symbolic beauty I did not find in the South. But to me some of the little places that are sacred to smaller and less awesome Buddhas, and occasional shrines to the Goddess of Pity, made a greater appeal. Very lovely is Kwan Yin, her features small and exquisitely moulded, her mouth drooping and soft, her whole attitude understanding and forgiving.

To such a temple on the borders of a little lake Hsu and the faithful Wong escorted us. So old that time itself seemed lost, the whole place was in decay. The priests no longer took services, worshippers never came, the gods crumbled into dust, the walls grew weak and cracked under the heat and leaked in the rain, and only the ancient custodian heeded.

But the roofs with their green and yellow tiles still remained beautiful; their long sloping angles each had its little troop of Peking lions and dogs in clay and porcelain, beautifully moulded, decorative and vital. At the head of the queue, overlooking the ground, sits the little figure of a man mounted on a plucked chicken. He stands as symbol of inveterate gossip, and the Chinese have a pleas-

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ing legend as to his fate. Wong was his name in life, when he made existence for his friends and neighbours hideous by tittle-tattle. He had eyes for everybody and ears that caught each sound, and no sooner had he discovered a titbit of scandal than he would run to repeat it. In this way he destroyed the happiness of many, and at last the clan felt that they must punish him. A wise man therefore changed Wong into a lump of clay, from which the potter modelled a little figure on a plucked chicken, and put him on the edge of a roof with a row of animals. Wong was able to see and hear all the titbits that went on, but had no one with whom he could share the fun. If he turned to talk to the animals they would bite him; his chicken could not fly with him to the ground because it was plucked, and if he jumped off himself he would be dashed to pieces! And so Wong sat in misery—and his descendants sit also—with never a soul to share the scandal they collect.

But though Wong was attractive to me, the yellow and green lions were infinitely more alluring. I gazed at them desirously, my mouth watering.

"Sometimes"—it was Hsu speaking—"a great wind blow animals down. My good friend he say in storm the other night three, four fell!"

Under a sky of translucent blue in an atmosphere unstirred by the faintest breeze, that thunderstorm seemed far away. But I had learnt that Hsu's sayings had a pith and meaning not always immediately apparent.

"You want animals, missy?" he continued.

"It would be wonderful," I said.

"You come to-morrow and look-see?"

"To-morrow," I agreed, and Bunny rapturously motioned to a beautiful young lion in yellow and his smaller friend in green.

"Will they be as lovely as these?" she asked.

Hsu said they would be, and after a short colloquy with the custodian we departed, to return again next day.

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Two of the fallen animals had been retrieved for us!

We were duly impressed and signified our desire to remunerate the good friend for salvaging them. But Hsu checked the disbursement, and leaving us in the courtyard went into the temple. We gathered that while one of the lions was whole and complete, the other was washed out, not to say decrepit. We waited patiently, and presently a second and perfect animal appeared. Hsu allowed his friend to receive two dollars, and we bore the pair off in triumph. They are with us to this day and smile on us benignly, though at times I fear they miss their little Mr Wong. . . .

Life was still punctuated by warlike alarums—the Japanese were expected, the nationals anticipated notice of evacuation. But side by side with these emotional stresses the days flowed in a deliciously smooth channel. Nowhere, I should say, can one pass such a delightful existence as in Peking. At the week-ends all through the spring and early summer people motor to the western hills and put up at one of the little temples scattered on the countryside. They can be rented for quite a moderate sum, and there is considerable rivalry for them among both Chinese and foreigners. We were taken to a very lovely spot by an American woman, who had secured the best temple and the best view in the teeth of strong competition. Halfway up the hill you entered a courtyard round which were low, one-storied buildings. Buddha's shrine occupied one side, the others were given over to domestic use. All day long pilgrims come up the mountain path to worship at these shrines, while close at hand the Westerners eat their meals, sit in the sun, and carry on their daily life. The two contingents do not interfere or jar upon each other. Buddha receives his votaries in one corner, guests are deposited in the others.

There was an atmosphere of calm, of unruffled security that seemed to bathe the hills, the temples, and farther

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down the valley the beauty of Peking, in a felicity of spirit that lost count of time and tribulation. The thunder of war seemed to belong to another world, and the shadow of invasion had no lot or part in so exquisite a scene.

We had a closer acquaintance, spiritually speaking, with temples before we left Peking. Like a casket the city keeps her gems of art and culture which, perpetually threatened, have never yet been utterly destroyed. But even within her walls you sense at times the stirring of those outer forces of wild barbarism which are for ever striving to break through. I felt this at the Temple of the Red Lamas, which lies on the outskirts of the city, one of a group where travelling lamas from Thibet hold missions. The priests, in rust-coloured robes and curious headdresses shaped like a Roman helmet made of cloth and wool, filed into the building, quite empty save for a crowd of small boys, postulants for the priesthood, who, also in red, filled three rows of the narrow forms which lined the body of the temple. They faced the chief lama, who, removing his helmet, stood on the right hand of a huge bronze Buddha with a vast and dehumanized face. The temple was dark and of sinister aspect, the walls hung with a deep red which the gloom intensified. We took our seats behind the boys. The chief lama, powerful, strongly built, and of great stature, towered above his assistants, who opened the service with a chant in which the boys joined.

There was a pause.

And then the huge figure opened his mouth. I have never heard so cruel, so hypnotic, so vibrant a voice. It was as though all humanity and tenderness, all recollection of kindly things, had been wiped out. And yet it held a dominance that scorched and seared. My senses began to prickle, the air grew close, I was suddenly and desperately afraid.

Proud with the arrogance of Satan, the voice chained the mind in a harsh sing-song that filled the ears and

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nostrils with implacable pain. It seemed to call upon the foul lusts, the tortuous desires that prowl about the body; the atmosphere was pregnant with the colour, the desire, of blood. I felt the desert and all the snarling horrors it contains were struggling to get in—beating against the doors of the subconscious. Evil had been loosed—distinct—palpable. . . . For an awful moment I had a prevision of the damned.

I clutched at Bunny. "I must get out," I said, and stumbled somehow to the door. . . .

I have been in queer places, experienced curious emotions, but the sheer terror of that temple stands stark—and I hope unexampled. . . . Perhaps, I thought later, there may have been thunder in the air so that I felt faint without knowing it. It seemed absurd to credit a lama in a Roman headdress with supernatural powers! Besides, what has Buddha the benign to do with blood?

I heard the explanation from an Englishwoman in the hotel, herself a Buddhist. There are, it seems, two orders of lamas, the Red and the Yellow. The Red evoke the forces of diabolism, the Yellow appeal to the powers of good. Possibly I am peculiarly susceptible to the influence of the first; but I do not propose to re-test the theory.

Our friend, however, suggested that we should attend the Yellow Lama Temple and gave us letters of introduction to the Abbot of the Order.

Here was another setting altogether—a white building with side-chapels hung with ancestral tablets, chaplets of flowers and little altars where candles and fragrant incense were burnt for the dead. Buddha, his own kindly and familiar self, smiled on priests, choir-boys, and a devout congregation of men, women, and children. The high, clear voice of the lama intoned, the priests chanted in response, the small boys and the people joining in the simple and refreshing act of worship.

After the service, which went on in endless rotation, the Abbot took us to a verandah where a table was spread



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with *li-chee* and apples, monkey-nuts and sweets. He gave us the fruits with his own hands, a courtly sign of welcome, blessed us as we ate, and presented each of us with a sacred medal. He had been Abbot for over sixty years, but his face and figure had the youth of a boy of twenty, and his eyes were wise and very kind. I left the temple feeling that I had been on holy ground.

The Red Lamas have few adherents in North China; their stronghold is in Mongolia, where, however, Red Lamaism and all that it denotes is strongly controlled, if not suppressed, by Russia, who has successfully established a Soviet republic.

In Peking for the most part ancestral rites are observed, Confucian and Buddhist temples visited on feast-days, when candles, sticks of incense, and silk handkerchiefs are dedicated to the god. The Confucian temple is within a stone's throw of the Red Lamas' haunt, and a keener contrast it is impossible to imagine. Calm, dispassionate and detached, reigns over the building and the court-yards planted with huge chestnut-trees, whose ancient roots reach far under the ground. Here are no priests, no ritual takes place; the great teacher, who two hundred and sixty-five years before Christ gave the world a code of ethics which covers every possible relationship, civic or family, needs no such remembrance. Meditation and silence are the offerings of his votaries. The beauty of the place, the spaciousness, the sense of reverence with which the very stones are impregnated, has something of the grandeur of the Greek philosophers. Here, one feels, is the secret of China's greatness, her invulnerability to external attack.

"If the maxims of Confucius were applied to our present-day difficulties and emergencies," said a Chinese scholar, "our troubles would be at an end."

Nevertheless, all sorts of things go on of which Confucius would never have approved. There is, for example, the Thieves' Market, where in the small hours of the

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morning all the goods stolen during the previous day are auctioned. Nothing, they say, is completely lost in Peking, it is always retrieved or discovered. Thieves properly approached through the officers of their guilds—the honourable order of thieves, like the esteemed society of beggars, is duly constituted—will always negotiate for the return of missing property. The police, like our own, work with the receivers as to which particular lawbreaker shall be released to them.

Guilds are paramount in Peking, and, though factories have sprung up on the outskirts, many industries are still housed in diminutive dwellings. The famous hand-woven carpets, for instance, of the finest texture and delightful pattern are made by small boys under the eagle eye of the overseer. Furniture repeats itself in beauty of design, and lacquer flourishes. And though Hollywood has permeated even to this ancient city, the old Chinese theatre is still enshrined.

On a night of blue velvet, when old Hatamen Street of the Chinese city, ablaze with streaming banners of red and gold, was a-bustle with rickshas and cars, water-carriers, fruit-sellers, students, young children, sedate tradesmen, and coolie women, we decided to go and see Mei Lan-fang, the great actor whose fame covers the country and has reached as far as San Francisco. The play is not lightly to be enjoyed in China. Beginning at six, the performance will go on till past midnight, occasionally continuing for days. Mei Lan-fang, however, has modified custom; his entertainment starts early but is concluded in one sitting. The theatre is small, with crowded seating accommodation on hard forms, both in the body of the house and in the galleries and the boxes, which are curiously like cattle-pens. The lights are not lowered in the auditorium; during the entire performance the whole place blazes with electric lamps.

The orchestra was in full blast as we entered. Drums with a peculiarly hollow sound were beaten, cymbals

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crashed, pipes shrilled, deep-throated instruments throbbed and wailed. No set piece was in progress—or so it seemed to our untutored ears—and at first the din was deafening, but after a while we realized that we were listening to orchestral effects—the clashing and the throbbing denoted special dramatic interests. The villain has his musical entry like the leading lady, and you learn to thrill appropriately.

The rise of the curtain had no effect on the audience, who continued to talk at the top of their voices, drinking lemonade and eating fruit, as though they were at home or in the open street. And then a slim tall figure in the dress of a Chinese princess glided on to the stage—and the house was suddenly still. Mei Lan-fang is famous for his feminine *rôles*. On the Chinese like the Elizabethan stage young males usually play women's parts. It was almost impossible to believe that the slender creature who so exquisitely manipulated the long sleeves trailing upon the ground was a man! Now and again the delicate finger-points of a white hand peered like a flower from the draperies, the sweep of a fan made a gorgeous curve—the sinuous rhythm of the figure was a miracle of grace. I have never seen a finer artist. His voice in the customary falsetto reached to the back of the theatre, each phrase instinct with its immediate emotion. His whole being was attuned to drama; the least movement, the slightest gesture, had its significance, and so forceful was his personality that from the acting alone the play explained itself. An historic drama of a hundred years ago, it concerned the beautiful wife of a mandarin, who, subjected to great temptation and the machinations of a sister-in-law, retained her virtue and was happy ever after!

Comedians, like our clowns, are distinguished by daubs of red and white; trouble or distress is symbolized by the appearance of old men of woebegone appearance. When, however, the situation begins to clear, they tumble and



MI LAN-TANG  
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A MOON-GATE  
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gyrate in great hilarity, to signify that the clouds are rolling by. Elizabethan touches are deliciously naïve—a sedan chair is represented by two little flags on each of which a wheel is painted; the character to be conveyed runs between the flags, the holder following closely after.

The curtain fell on an ovation for the female lead, who, however, took no calls; and happy, though almost disintegrated—the heat and clammy stuffiness were unbelievable—we came out, to find the faithful Hsu in waiting.

And so through the soft night round the scented dimness of the Legation Quarter, with its comfort and ease and isolated affluence. As we passed through the gate marked with the bullets of the Taiping rebels, a little figure suddenly emerged and a piping voice invited our attention. We asked Hsu to stop, and a boy of about seven commenced to speak his piece in fluent English:

“ You rich man, I poor man; I no mother, no father, no chow, no whisky-soda—give me ten cents! ”

It is the greeting of every street urchin who can learn the parrot lilt, but on this occasion the small boy was lucky and got his *cumsha*—his lightning change from abject misery to dancing glee was sheer art!

He might, we felt, become one day another Mei Langfan. In Peking stranger things have happened.

## CHAPTER XVI

### FREE WOMEN OF CHINA—CHILD SLAVES OF HONG KONG

**T**HE treatment of woman may be taken as the index finger to a nation's culture. In a materialist civilization her position is usually an inferior one—witness her status under Prussian and Japanese rule.

But with China philosophic values have always taken first place and in her civilization woman holds an important place. Miss 1933—possibly with bobbed and waved hair—looks at a world in which all roads are open to her sex. She may enter any profession—medicine, the law, aviation, engineering—she may even study military tactics. But for the most part these avenues do not appeal to her. Marriage and motherhood are still the things she desires most, and as there are more men than women in China she can get what she wants. In all civic matters she is man's equal, but there again she prefers to remain behind the scenes rather than descend into the political arena.

I discussed these matters with Dr Sophie Chen, one of the most prominent women in China. A very charming person, she is a Professor at Peking National University and the author of a standard work on modern philosophy. To me she expresses the social and philosophic attitude of the Chinese woman of to-day.

"We have always played a significant part in our national development," she told me. "Women were never oppressed to the extent you Westerners believed.

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Your travellers saw our bound feet and supposed our minds were bound also and our wills. But it was not the case. The bogey of the mother-in-law was so prodigious that Europeans forgot that the importance assigned to her position was in itself a proof of feminine ascendancy. For inevitably the girl-bride of to-day is the mother-in-law of to-morrow."

We were talking in Dr Chen's writing-room. The windows overlooked a courtyard shady with trees, her desk was littered with English and French books, the fine brushes and Indian ink used for Chinese script, and the red plastic wax for the seal, painted, not impressed, upon the paper.

A soft-voiced little woman with bright eyes and a quick smile, she speaks beautiful English and has a wide knowledge of Western literature.

"We have always preserved our individuality," she went on softly, "after as before marriage. When a wife wrote or painted she inevitably used her own name—not her husband's. It was felt that her talent was her own and that she should receive personal acknowledgment. One of our greatest national poets was a woman who lived a thousand years ago. Her husband was a poet also, though of less distinction. But there was no rivalry between them; they gloried in each other's achievements, and when she died the people mourned. The same custom holds good to-day. All through our history women have been free to practise any art, and by free I mean that their social prestige did not suffer, rather it was increased. Outside the arts it was a different matter. Then, as now, it was not considered desirable that women should adopt any calling which brought them in contact with men not of their own family. It is felt that a woman loses caste if she competes with men either in business or the professions. This may pass, but I do not think it likely that women as a whole will wish to become economically independent. We prefer marriage," she added smiling.



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“And remember a Chinese wife is always supreme in her own home.”

Even in Government departments women are not usually employed. There are no Chinese girl secretaries or shorthand typists; the commercial and the professional world is run by men.

I had already noticed an entire absence of Chinese sales-ladies in the shops. Even in Shanghai the female assistant is an Eurasian, while in small affairs where the family own the shop Father opens up in the morning and superintends the cleaning done by small boys, arranges the stock, and serves customers. Mother occasionally keeps the books and superintends the cash, but she does none of the work of the store, and when her husband's duties are done will sit on the side-walk nursing baby and talking. Women on the land and in poor homes work like horses, but it is for the benefit of a family, not for an employer. I did not see a woman pushing a barrow or dragging heavy loads in the public streets; the men always help to carry bundles and babies! On the other hand, in all classes of society woman has a considerable voice in the family finance and in the upbringing of the children.

All the hotels are staffed by men, who are also engaged as house-boys by Westerners. A Chinese woman will act as personal maid to Missy or as *amah* to her children, but her duties do not include attendance on any males. Only to the men of her own family does she give service.

“It is the same among the workers,” said Dr Chen. “As you know, we have very many operatives, but so far as possible they keep within their family groups. Waitresses in *cafés* and restaurants are still the exception. It takes men a long time to readjust their sense of values, and when they are served by girls in a public place they tend to regard them like sing-song girls who exist for their amusement. But time will perhaps correct their judgment.”

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One calling, however, Miss China can follow and be sure of the greatest *réclame*. Teaching has always been regarded as a most honourable profession which brings credit to every woman. Moreover, its adoption does not affect her matrimonial chances, but enhances her desirability. Hundreds of girls each year graduate as school-mistresses. Further, in pursuance of the family ideals, women may serve as magistrates.

“And marriage to-day?” I asked.

“Its conventions have certainly altered—among the *intelligentzia*, that is to say. The country people cling to the old traditions. In the villages the mother-in-law though not supreme is still powerful and rules her sons’ wives, while daughters are subservient to the parental selection of husbands. But even here legend has exaggerated maternal authority. There were cases even in the old, old days when a girl’s preference was considered. A mother would arrange for a daughter to have a glimpse of her future husband of whom she always heard the current gossip. If she entertained a revulsion against him the match was not infrequently broken off. To-day outside the rural districts marriages are made by choice in the Western fashion, though in some working-class families the old ways hold good. Moreover, husband and wife entertain their friends and visit them together. It used to be considered a grave breach of etiquette for a woman to receive masculine friends apart from family relations. A wife never appeared at a social function, dinner-parties were only for men; the two sexes, socially speaking, were segregated.”

But, and this to me is most significant, though to-day the Chinese wife has all the liberty of her Western sister, she retains that delicate aloofness which is one of her chief charms. Boy and girl students study and play together, share the same swimming-pools and tennis-grounds, go to the play and to the cinema. But they keep the amazing standard of good manners conspicuous

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throughout the nation. There is good comradeship but no familiarity. In all classes sex in China has no public manifestation, and throughout the period of my stay I never saw a man fail in the observance of a very pleasant but slightly detached courtesy.

Young couples nowadays do not live under the family roof but make their own homes. The plurality of wives is also passing into oblivion. Monogamy is the fashion, though the racial urge for male progeny permits the taking of a second wife or a concubine if the first does not produce a son. To die without male issue of his body is, to a Chinese, to be denied that ancestral worship that is his spiritual right.

A most pathetic instance of marital responsibility increased perforce occurred quite recently in Peking. A distinguished and wealthy Chinese married an European woman. Very much in love with each other they shared the same tastes in sport and art and domestically were completely happy. But their six children, alas, were all girls! One after the other female babies were born until in despair the husband felt he must discover another woman to be mother of his son. The necessity was explained to the wife by the mother-in-law, and after a heartbreaking scene it was agreed he should select a concubine at a suitable distance, who, when she shall have done her duty, will be pensioned off, while her boy will be brought back to the wife, who will bring him up as her own! But, as I remembered, adoption is an old custom in China. Some of her most famous statesmen born in poverty and hardship have been the foster-sons of wealthy fathers.

Conscious of a marvellous combination of tradition and modernism, I left the pretty little house of Dr Chen where with her husband and children she makes her home. Later I was to see an astonishing survival of a bygone age.

The girls and the women of China make up very prettily, with a discreet use of rouge, eyebrow pencil, and

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lipstick. They do not arrange their faces in public but emerge in the cool of the day with immaculate complexions. Throughout the ages cosmetics have been used ; indeed, a woman who exhibited her face *au naturel* would have stamped herself as a disreputable person. The heavier the paint the greater the virtue. Sometimes the excess of both must have assumed the likeness of a mask.

That, at least, was my impression of a little lady alighting from her ricksha in the Chinese city. She wore the modern costume, but her hair was dressed in the high twirls and puffs that used to be *de rigueur*, her eyebrows were a thick black line across her whitened forehead, and the rouge on her high-bred little face was thick. And yet with all this panoply of decoration she retained a fastidious carriage and a delicate air. I seemed to see her in one of those marvellous old houses that lie outside the centre of the city, the desire of every European heart.

The road, generally unpaved and dusty, leads to a wide gate of a lovely lacquer red which opens on a courtyard with low and pleasant buildings. You pass through other courtyards, with long verandahs, each with a distinctive decorative feature—a bed of iris, an incense-burner, a swimming-pool, a giant stork, or a moon-gate through which one sees a vista of fragrant flowers and trees. In the rooms, gracious and dignified, are cabinets and tables, carvings and scrolls, that blend most pleasingly with comfortable modern chairs and divans. Most homes are furnished with that mixture of East and West that detracts nothing from tradition but adds a pleasant touch of modern comfort.

The womenfolk spend a free and unfevered life. In the cities Miss China goes to college and generally enjoys existence, her mother orders the household and in her leisure achieves miracles of embroidery. They entertain their friends either with mah-jong or the modern gramophone and discuss literature and politics ; occasionally they visit the theatre and the cinema. But the serenity

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of the household remains immune from outside clamour; life is always vivid, but family interest remains centred in the home.

In Chinese as in Western households Number One attends to all the domestic management, but ardent housewives still do their own shopping. This does not include clothes and shoes—Miss China never buys these at a store, they are made to measure by skilled craftsmen who fit her at home. In the winter furs and cloth and velvet are fashioned into coats and pelisses, but during the long summer months silk is the general wear. Electric fans cool the rooms—huge stoves are used to heat them.

To me the Chinese girl occupies the most favoured of positions. She enjoys full liberty to go into the world and at the same time is protected by custom and tradition from discourtesy or oppression. This, of course, applies chiefly to the *intelligentzia*, but the observance holds good throughout society.

Marriages and funerals are still the most important social functions. In the South fashionable Chinese adopt Western dress and use cars for these occasions, though even the most modern will sport the ceremonial red. In Peking tradition largely remains, though the *intelligentzia* slightly modify the ceremonial. The workers, however, carry out the least detail of ritual.

We were present at the wedding of a temple incense-server, one of the loveliest occasions in my travels. It is difficult to permeate into a Chinese family circle, and we had despaired of witnessing a classic marriage. But Hsu secured for us an invitation. The bridegroom was one of his good friends—like Hsu he traced back his descent for five-and-twenty generations—and there were other bonds of contact. The wedding feast was held at a Chinese restaurant. The approach through narrow streets was bustling with festivity, musicians in rust-red robes with green embroideries and shovel hats to match were tuning their instruments, the neighbours crowded

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to their doors, small children were legion. The bridegroom in a scholarly white robe welcomed us in English and took us to his mother, a sweet-faced woman in a blue silk gown. The reception-room with a large table and comfortable chairs was crowded with women guests. Some of them were in exquisite brocades, glittering pins in their sleek hair, others in white jackets and short black trousers, but all of them beautifully groomed and perfectly mannered. Young girls were there and aged ladies, small babies and little children. The table, spread with bowls of fruit and small cakes, was later replenished with authentic chow and green tea. But the banquet was not yet; the slighter viands were but to stay the appetite during a protracted interval.

Across the courtyard, through the verandah, we could see another room filled with men who occasionally drifted into the female compartment and exchanged bows and a few words of greeting. We got on admirably with the guests, taught each other Chinese and English words, and conversed in symbols when the language difficulty grew insuperable. I had a long 'talk' with a delightful little lady of about fifty. We told each other how agonizing it was to have bound feet, and that the pain spread to the arms and up the shoulders! Bunny meanwhile was exchanging smiles with a lovely girl who herself was shortly to be married; and then a sudden excitement stirred the courtyard, and we were invited by the groom to go out and have a look-see!

The bridal wagon—a sedan-chair on which a closed roof and sides are superimposed—is hung with wonderful embroideries of blue and gold on a red ground. So completely is the whole arrangement covered that the poor little bride is almost stifled in her passage from her parents' house to her husband's!

Immediately after the wagon set out, escorted by musicians at full tilt, two of the groom's men friends in elegant white robes and gloves, with large red button-

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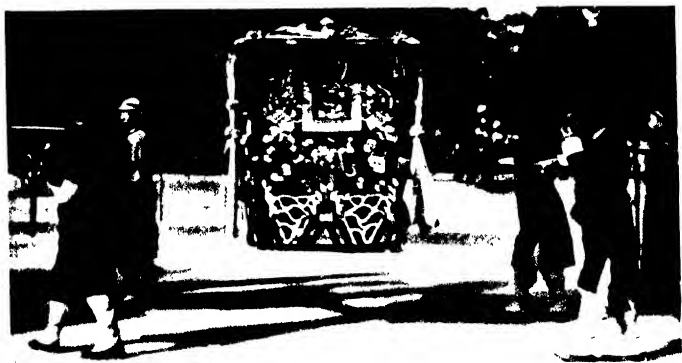
holes and straw hats, departed in a brougham. It was their duty to call at the bride's home, pay their respects to her mother, and escort the wagon on the journey back. Meantime, however, nobody has a glimpse of the day's heroine. The wagon, lifted over the devil-step, receives her unseen by any save her family—who remain behind!

We watched the return of the procession from the courtyard. First came the groom's friends, then the musicians, lastly the wagon glittering in the sun, carried in triumph by twelve bearers. Along the courtyard, through the verandah, it solemnly proceeded until the threshold of the ante-room, discreetly curtained off, was reached. Immediately the mother-in-law, aunts, and attendant cousins crowded round to mask the little bride from view. The curtains opened to receive them—the first chapter of the Chinese wedding had come to an end.

A bride takes nothing of her old life to her new. One by one she is divested of her garments by the women of her husband's family, ceremoniously washed and her bridal apparel put on. We were allowed to enter the tiny room where the bride was made ready. A delicate, shrinking, rather exquisite little creature, she sat motionless and huddled up on the divan while silk underwear, stockings and slippers, and the red wedding-dress were placed on her frail figure. It was a breathless day, and the journey in the stifling atmosphere of the bridal wagon must have been a martyrdom! But the consciousness that for this one hour of her life—however long, laborious, and full of tribulation it might be—she held all eyes, the centre of rapt attention, must, I think, have sustained her.

When she was ready they fetched the groom. For a moment he stood hesitating, almost shy, then parting the curtains went in to the bride and the two young things were together for the first time!

The marriage was celebrated before a little altar with the family ancestral tablets, flowers and incense-burners, candles and a bow and arrow to scare devils away. We



THE PORTRAIT-CASKET

(p. 251)



MOURNERS CARRYING PAPER STREAMERS

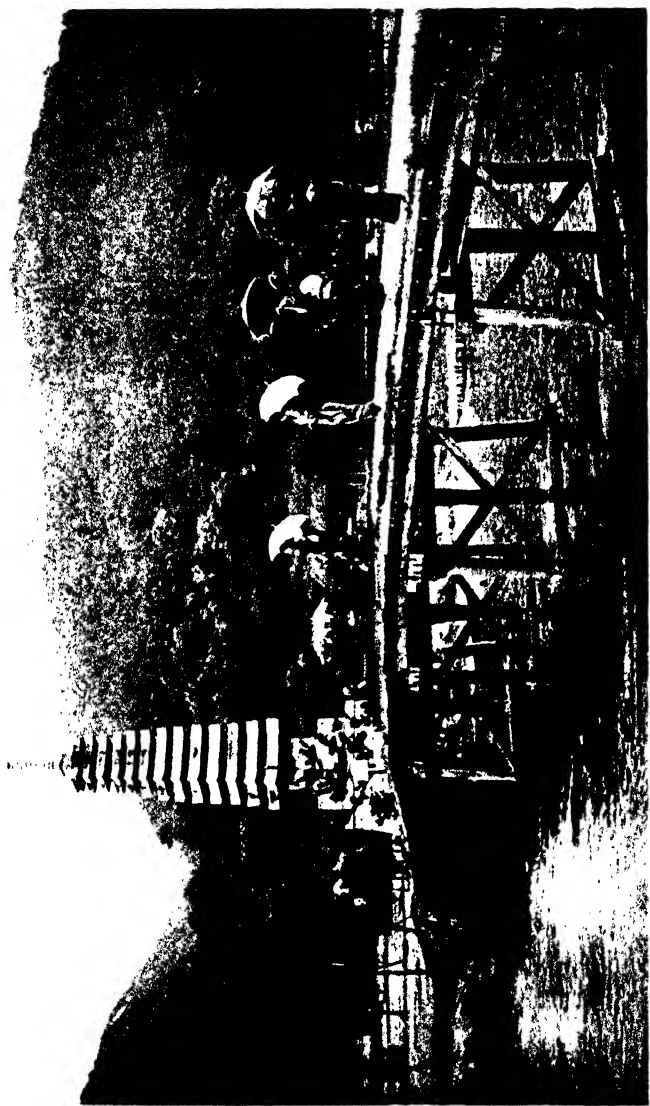
(p. 251)



THE MUSICIANS

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left the young couple surrounded by friends crowding in with gifts of flowers and food and *samsu*. The festivities, which continued all night into the small hours of the morning, quite probably went on for the next few days!

Funeral celebrations last even longer than weddings. From the moment death approaches a sick person incense is burnt and crackers are fired off. This demonstration goes on at recurrent intervals for weeks—like a perpetual salvo of artillery. Meanwhile the earthly possessions of the deceased—those he had and those he longed for—are reproduced in miniature. Wealthy families order replicas of *papier-mâché*, exquisite models of houses, motor-cars, ceramics, jewels, horses, and dogs. Poorer people have to be content with paper imitations. These are all burnt so that the dead may find their simulacra attendant in the next world! Important people have many ceremonies before the final interment. The coffin is ensconced in a summer-house and respectfully visited and saluted by relatives and friends. When at last the funeral *cortège* sets out it is preceded by bands of mourners dressed in white carrying long graceful paper streamers gushing like willow wands. Then come the musicians, dressed as for a wedding in green and rust, to be followed by the portrait casket shaped like a smaller bridal wagon and carrying the picture of the deceased. The casket, like the coffin, is draped in red and gold—the same draperies serve for death as for marriage.

The coffin, fashioned from two halves of a tree-trunk, contains a smaller shell in which the dead reposes. Resting on poles, it is carried by bearers, sometimes as many as a hundred and forty. The poorest family will contrive to have sixteen, and the wealthy classes pile up the number. Funeral ceremonies like wedding trappings are red—it is China's symbolic colour. Last in the procession comes the chief mourner, who—man or woman—sits with handkerchief held discreetly to the eyes. The ancient custom of tear-bottles, which caught the grief drops of

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the mourner, gauging the sincerity of sorrow by the number, are no longer used! Otherwise the ritual and the baked meats still carry out ancestral decree.

"We do not believe in excessive mourning," a young Chinese explained to me. "We are modern in thought, and our mother's obsequies will continue only for a year."

Any estimate of Chinese family life must include the custom of barter in relation to children. Slavery was legally abolished by the Republic in 1911, but *sub rosa* it still goes on. There is little traffic in small males, who in most cases are legally adopted, and economics and the law have considerably modified the sale of females. In the old days, when mandarins kept a vast *entourage*, a slave more or less did not matter. Nowadays officials and traders alike are impoverished, and the cost of an additional mouth to feed has to be reckoned. Such sales, however, do continue and in times of national poverty considerably increase. The children so bought become domestic servants, sing-song girls—the equivalent of *geisha*—and recruit the brothels. But national tradition and public opinion, as vested in the clan, makes for the good treatment of the waifs and strays incorporated in a household. And for the rest there would seem to be little difference between East and West in the status of the harlot. At least in China the latter are free to come and go from their *depôts*, unlike Japan, where the unhappy inmates of such places are incarcerated for life. Moreover, in China their earnings do not go to swell the revenues of the State. . . .

It is in Hong Kong, under the Union Jack, that the enormity of slavery becomes apparent. In this British Colony, removed from the pressure of traditional usage, the treatment of the *mui tsai*, as they are called, tends to be vicious. A hundred years ago, when we acquired the island, the Chinese settlers were assured freedom to carry on their social and religious customs—of which female slavery was one. But not only did the incoming settlers

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bring *mui tsai* with them, but they were allowed to establish a market for their sale and purchase. The tragic children were bought and sold, and sold and bought over and over again. They had no wages and no rights, though many of them admittedly were decently treated.

Cases are on record of small children of between six and seven who had to do the work and the washing of an entire family by day and mind the baby by night; of unfortunates sold into prostitution who tried to commit suicide; victims of cruelty who having escaped were found by the police and returned to their owners.

This practically continued down to 1930, when public attention in England was awakened by Lady Simon, Lady Gladstone, and Lieut.-Commander and Mrs H. L. Haslewood. After a protracted campaign in Parliament, the Hong Kong administration was ordered to carry out the Home Government's enactment which prohibited further sale of *mui tsai*, forbade their importation, and required the registration and inspection of those already in the Colony. Further, the little slaves were to be paid wages, given regular holidays, and any who wished to leave their owners were to be free to do so.

And now when 'slavery' is no longer officially admitted in Hong Kong, what exactly happens? There is a law compelling registration of *mui tsai*, but the penalty for breaking it is so slight that it makes little difference. Generally speaking it means a fine of ten to twenty dollars—a dollar in English money being worth 1s. 3d. As a result many people do not register at all, which means that there is no effective inspection and that the little slave is completely at the mercy of her owner.

Re-sale, though prohibited, still continues and for the same reason. The penalty for selling a girl, either as a domestic servant or to a brothel-keeper, is never more than a few dollars, a very small part of the purchase price received.

Even in cases of gross cruelty the punishment is still a

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fine. When I was in Hong Kong cases came up where the children had been horribly maltreated. In most instances the Anti-Mui-Tsai Society, organized and run solely by Hong Kong Chinese, was responsible for the prosecution. But a British magistrate sits on the Bench.

A small child of eight, with a badly bruised face, gave evidence. Information was dragged from her with the greatest difficulty. Her owner was listening, and the girl knew what she might expect if she told the truth. It was a large family, but the *mui tsai* did everything—heavy washing, scrubbing, cooking, and cleaning. “No, she didn’t get any wages, but at the New Year she was given a few cents.”

I seemed to see the little creature dragging huge wash-tubs, staggering under heavy loads, the fear of a blow tightening her heart. Her owner was fined a trifling amount and went off in triumph with the child.

It is not only that these children are very often hideously overworked and underfed, but in addition they are hired out for profit. There is the case of a child of ten who was let to a knitting factory, where she worked ten hours a day, washing up and cleaning for the family after she got back at night. She stood all the time at the factory and had charge of an infant at night. She never received a penny of the money paid and the facts of the case were only made public through the Anti-Mui-Tsai Society.

The endurance and the patience of these poor things make their fate even more pitiable. Obedience is instilled with every breath, and to them their owner has the power of life and death. A *mui tsai* is never allowed to forget that purchase money was paid to her family and that it is her first duty to discharge the debt. A girl who was the sole household worker in a family consisting of two married couples, a concubine, and eight children, without wages and with insufficient food, was told she could not leave until she had paid the full

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amount, with interest. And she believed it. It would have taken a long time—she received only twenty cents a month!

It is an axiom in English law that men and women cannot sell themselves into slavery. Not so in Hong Kong. An unfortunate girl, ill-treated and raped, induced a woman to redeem her from her owners and in return sold herself for seven years, two dollars every month to be credited to her account till the total of the original sum—a hundred and eighty dollars—with interest, was reached.

Then, again, *mui tsai* are still imported. Not under that name, but as the niece, cousin, adopted daughter of their owners, who in nine cases out of ten get away with the tale. It is impossible to keep track of all these attempted impositions with the small staff of inspectors available.

There is a Chinese population of some six hundred thousand in Hong Kong, most of them belonging to the poorer and lower middle classes who invariably keep a *mui tsai*. This means that there must be quite twenty thousand female slaves, though only four thousand are registered. But even these cannot effectively be safeguarded. The Government employs one inspector and two assistants, so that only the very small proportion of reported owners can be visited. And in spite of drastic protests by the Chinese nothing is done. The Anti-Mui-Tsai Society demands a more effective inspection, with increased fines for failure to register, and in bad cases sentences of imprisonment. But the *dolce far niente* of the climate and the easy luxury of the ordinary European's surroundings make it difficult to concuss Western opinion or to wake up the administration to drastic action.

The principle of human bondage may have been denounced, but in effect little has been altered. The barter of flesh and blood continues, the pitiable victims are still

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exploited, and newer and younger purchases swell the throng. The inevitable has happened. The scandal has been forgotten. Hong Kong is a long way off, the Home Government is busy, the local Government indifferent, and slavery grows and flourishes under the British flag.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE STAR OF THE EAST

**I**N considering the future possible development of China it is essential that these apparently divergent but actually compensatory points should be borne in mind. On the one hand—I have said this before, but its realization is essential to proper understanding—she is socially homogeneous, completely and unbreakably organized in family units which preserve traditional law and order. On the other she is politically disrupted with only the most incomplete central administration. The problem is to reconcile the two.

Before the Republic the mandate of the Manchus, weak and corrupt though they were, ran throughout the country, though it was inevitable from the first that this degenerate dynasty would collapse. Indeed, with amazing prevision their downfall was designed some two hundred and fifty years before by Hung Cheng-chow, the Chinese Prime Minister in the early days of Manchu rule. By the terms of the treaty between the Imperial House and the people, no Manchu could marry a Chinese or demean himself by engaging in any art or craft, business or profession, or accept any official position save in the Army. Every Manchu was to receive a pension, and lead the life of a gentleman! Under which provision luxury and idleness sapped their vigour, destroyed their fighting force, and bred a supine effeminacy that made the whole Court rotten to the core. Further, the wise Hung Cheng-chow decreed that though Chinese men should follow the Manchu fashion and wear a pigtail, the



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women should retain their national dress and national customs, of which the binding of the feet was one.

In its appointed time the Manchu fruit dropped in decay, and a Republic was established. Even then the official and political structure of the Empire might have held together, but with all the short-sighted vigour of a reformer, as distinct from the prevision of a statesman, Sun Yat-sen smashed right and left, uprooting here, destroying there, until he had dislocated every cog in the workable though complicated and corrupt machinery of the State. But though he broke a number of eggs he never made an omelette, and left China in a state of confusion almost unparalleled in her history.

His dreams were gentle and imaginative, and Young China always insists that of all her leaders he was the most selfless and devoted. But destruction is a heady potion and it went to Sun's brain. He might have evolved a scheme of government which, while it eliminated corruption and oppression, yet retained respect for central authority. But Western ideas had replaced Confucian wisdom; he appears to have argued that a system of government which worked well in comparatively small European units could be applied to the vast continent of China. And now, eight years after his death, the general insecurity and dislocation far exceeds the national instability under the Manchus.

Sun had a concept of China resurgent and united, but I cannot myself visualize the North and the South becoming one and indivisible. The divergence of their temperaments is as radical as the difference in their foods. Less febrile and more contained, the North has few political or economic contacts with the South. The old rivalry which alternately wrested the seat of power from Peking to Nanking and back again still exists. Individual leaders and war-lords may coalesce in sudden emergencies, but the people as a whole have a different viewpoint.

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Thus the boycott so swiftly and dominantly established in the South touches the Northerner less closely. Without effective water transport or railway communication, they are shut off from the economic ferments that churn the passions of millions of their fellow-countrymen. Industrial centres in the interior are few, and the concentrated hostility to foreign competition barely stirs local trade. Rooted in agriculture, diversified by odd jobs of banditry when the crops fail, the political reactions of the more excitable South are outside their experience. They are at once more stable and less easily impressed or alarmed by external influences. In the same way Communism has failed to touch or even vitally to interest them. Shanghai, with its teeming factories and storehouses of wealth, centres anti-capitalist revulsions which radiate throughout the South. Hankow still feels the influence of Borodin and nourishes the hope of established collectivism. But to all these influences North China remains cool. And while Soviet agents everywhere are busy with propaganda their tenets do not impress themselves upon the people.

I do not think the North will depart from its traditional economics; collectivism in these remote areas has little chance.

But though conservative and slow-moving, the North remains the cultural centre of China by virtue of Peking, and by degrees is imposing her language on the younger generation throughout the country. Mandarin, as spoken in the capital, is very pretty to the ear. The vowels are French and the consonants much softer than in the South. It is said that apart from local dialects the vast area of China is served by only eight different tongues, which, however, it is thought will eventually give way to Mandarin. Fifteen years ago a movement was started for the unification of language. Professors and students were leagued together all over the country to this end, and wherever a primary or village school is established Man-

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darin is taught. The written language or ideography common to the whole of China expresses concrete objects and ideas by individual pictures which in process of time have become stylized into conventional characters. There is no alphabet in Chinese, every word is a monosyllable represented by its separate ideograph. The head man in every village invariably understands this written language, which enables him to act as interpreter for foreigners or nationals from a different district.

The classic dictionary compiled some two hundred years ago by a Manchu Emperor included fifty thousand ideographs. To-day with the addition of new scientific and economic terms the number has been increased to seventy thousand or more. For the simple purposes of daily life, however, a thousand ideographs are sufficient, and it is on this basis that children of the new generation are taught.

But though the North is imposing her culture on the South she still remains nationally aloof. She displays none of the flaming revulsion against foreign conquest that in 1932 convulsed Canton and the Yangtze. It is not that she lacks what we should call patriotism, but the tradition of foreign invasion automatically succeeded by the absorption of the invader has become so embedded in the psychology of the people that it is an integral part of their mentality. Mongol and Manchu have come—and have passed away. To Peking in her eternity of wisdom it matters not so very much in whose name her territories are ruled, for it is implicit in her destiny that she will swallow all her rulers!

Even the Japanese menace does not urgently affright her. The little men will only follow the great Genghis Khan and the rest.

In discussing the Japanese invasion which is in progress as I write, I do not desire in the least to discount the bravery of the Chinese soldier, nor the national capacity for leadership. But the facts remain that, first, China is

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without effective means of defence or attack and, second, that to-day victory lies not in the number of men but in the efficacy of military material, of which Japan has considerable reserves.

With Japan at the gates one has to visualize her possible future intentions in regard to China. She may for the moment be content to consolidate her advance just over the river Lwan south of the Great Wall, to which point she may extend the boundary of Manchukuo. She may, however, in spite of the truce, push on even to the very centres of Peking and Tientsin.

But whether it be to-day or to-morrow, Japan ultimately designs to annex North China down to the Yellow Sea. This will inevitably threaten British interests, particularly in Tientsin, where we have a valuable Concession. Built on a reclaimed marsh, admirably planned and sanitated, it is a business stronghold, with many factories and works, and Chinese millionaires regard it as a safe-deposit for their wealth and valuables. Our financial interests in the Settlement alone are enormous, covering many far-reaching investments.

It is important to realize that Japan, who firmly supports the Monroe doctrine of "Asia for the Asiatics," is not likely to tolerate the continued existence of this powerful and independent Settlement. If, as it is claimed, her armed control of North China would remove serious risk to property throughout the country, it is improbable that she will safeguard British wealth without a *quid pro quo*. Capture of Peking would and must endanger the stability of our Tientsin holdings. Our acquiescence in the first threatens our interests in the second.

If and when Japan establishes herself to this extent she may, as suggested in August 1932, set up a puppet-state and bring Pu Yi back from Manchukuo to his old seat upon the dragon throne of Peking. As an alternative she may avowedly appropriate the territory and proclaim the Emperor of Japan as Son of Heaven.

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This enemy coronation would not be new to China and would have little more permanent effect on her social fabric than on previous occasions. Such entrenchment, however, would have a marked influence on Japan's future militarist plans. She could recruit huge armies from the bandits and the local war-lords and secure unlimited reserves of coal and iron from the vast national deposits of North China. This would enable her to take the field with man-power unequalled in the West. In computing future possibilities it is as well to visualize Japan not as a people of seventy millions, but as a country with new and terrifying reserves.

From a trading point of view she would scoop the Eastern market for coal, working the mines with local labour. She would be in a position to freeze out our trade north of the Yangtsze and seriously impair it to the south. At this moment I should say she does not envisage the capture of South China; as an immediate proposition it would be rather tough, but her plans may grow with her advance.

If the Japs by a miracle remain content with the Lwan line it seems probable that Home Rule for North China within the Republic could be established. All the conflicting factors in changing China seem to point not towards a centralized hegemony, but to a federation of states, each with their individual economic and political systems.

North China, as we have seen, has not reacted to Communist principles; the Soviets of the Yangtsze have no parallel beyond the Yellow River. But in face of the persistent coalescence of the Southern areas it is difficult to believe that Communism can be rooted out, and the mere process of time must eventually call a halt to a recurrent military attack which achieves no definite issue.

It must be remembered that the provinces of China in some cases are larger than entire Western countries, so that under a scheme of self-administration a federation

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of states would be eminently practical. Such an arrangement would allow Communism to neighbour capitalism throughout the country, and though the people might adopt divers political and economic systems the social unit would remain unchanged.

This way, it seems to me, lies China's chief hope of reconstruction. Of all her brilliant and prominent men not one emerges as a permanent dictator. Chiang Kai-shek, the popular leader, has, I think, too great a fear of losing money and position to stake his all upon a single throw, though he may be pushed into trying it. T. V. Soong, pre-eminent in finance, may be described as successful but hardly inspired, and for the rest there are many very able but few outstanding national figures among either military or political circles. Lo Wen-kan lacks the ruthlessness to seize on supreme power, while the erstwhile hope of the North, Chang Hsueh-liang, the "Young Marshal," as he was popularly called, has definitely lost face over the surrender of Jehol and has sought refuge in Europe.

Perhaps the most interesting of China's eminent men is Wu Chi-hui, a member of the Executive Council and a supporter of Chiang, who, report says, not only respects but also fears him. A figure of romance, Wu Chi-hui is a famous Sinologue and a materialist philosopher. His declaration of faith in this direction brought him under Manchu displeasure. He was sentenced to death but managed to escape to Japan, who promptly extradited him, and he was shipped back to China—with death awaiting. But mid-way across the Yellow Sea he took a chance, jumped overboard, and swam and swam, ultimately to be rescued by a fishing-boat, transferring later to a steamer on which he travelled to England. He could not speak a word of the language, but our country in those days was synonymous with liberty and he felt sure of a haven.

This remarkable man and great scholar set about earn-

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ing his living and, everything else failing, he became a laundryman in the East End! He worked early and late, but with that marvellous self-discipline which distinguishes his nation Wu Chi-hui went short of sleep and abolished leisure to learn English, in which he became most fluent, devouring Huxley, Herbert Spencer, and John Stuart Mill.

With the establishment of the Republic he returned to China and resumed his professorship; but his frugality continued. He lived on the cheapest food, rice-flour mixed with water, invariably wore calico instead of silk, and housed himself in the meanest lodgings. Thus he was enabled to devote practically the whole of his salary to the support of poor students who otherwise could not have attended the University. And now, at sixty years of age, his intellect hard as ever, his will strengthened, he remains an incalculable force. While Chiang serves China he will support him. If deliberately the Commander-in-Chief puts himself first, his country second, Wu Chi-hui will—reconsider!

He is, however, a scholar, not a statesman. Indeed, China, like the rest of the world, has a dearth of effective dictators, and unless the national ferment precipitates a giant personality the *via media* to her renaissance does not seem to be in that direction. Rather I see her as a star—her national emblem—new rising in the East of which each point is an individual province, separate and complete.

Meanwhile outside the Communist areas Kuomintang is gaining support. I do not think, however, that the nations who discuss China so glibly at Geneva are attempting sincerely to give Nanking either help or counsel. In retaining Peking as the diplomatic headquarters they are inflicting loss of face on the Nationalist Government and at the same time suggesting that the ancient capital must remain the determining factor in the country's history. Personally I incline to the belief that the diplomatic corps

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remains in Peking because life there flows in such luxurious channels. Sport of all kinds is to hand, beautiful country, an agreeable climate—the Yangtze looms fierce and *farouche* beside its well-bred calm. But if Britain and the rest really want to give a hand to Young China they should, I feel, shift their ground, and while retaining the Legation Quarter as a pleasure resort get down to real work in Nanking. Indeed, if the Japanese menace matures they must perforce establish their Chinese headquarters in that far less agreeable city.

But in any case I doubt if either European or American influence will count for very long in China's future. There has been too much of racial arrogance, contempt, and chicanery for her people or her statesmen easily to feel confidence in Westernism, and while she is indubitably grateful for United States uplift and for British friendship, her natural ally lies in another direction.

It is not solely for its economic principles that Communism has found so ready an adherence. Russia in all her dealings with the Chinese has always shown a psychological understanding lacking in other Powers. She has never suffered as a nation from that colour sense that has so often betrayed British interests, and her assumption of superiority has had nothing to do with the arrogance of white as against yellow. For this reason, as also because of the natural affinity between the peasantry of two vast countries, the bond between China and the U.S.S.R. will, I think, definitely strengthen. China will doubtless acquire Soviet culture, but she will assimilate—never will she be absorbed!

I look back on my experiences in China, and from all the conflicting interests, the changing influence of East and West, there emerges a consciousness of unconquerable vitality, an ineradicable love of liberty, a patience, a humour, and a kindness unmatched.

China has suffered and will suffer many things, but through her agony and rupture, her famines, floods,



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bandits and corruption, her unconquerable will to live goes on, and though she be dismembered and exploited, sweated and enslaved, she will rise again from her ashes to draw new strength from the indestructible roots of the national family tree.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### “THEY WATCHED ME WHEN I TRIED TO EAT”

WE left Peking on a sad evening—though the setting sun was smiling on the city. Hsu and Wong attended us to the station, where with ceremonious bows they gave us each a bouquet. It is a Chinese custom to bring flowers to a well-liked departing guest—and the simple friendliness of the act gave us keen pleasure. We had a wonderful send-off, and looking out of the windows of the train we caught a last glimpse of the yellow and green roofs which it is my dearest hope to see again before I die.

We embarked at Taku Bar, the port of Tientsin, on a Japanese ship, the *Chojo Maru*, for Kobe. From the moment I set foot on deck I was conscious of a change of spiritual atmosphere. After the warm kindliness of China, responsive, considerate, and non-inquisitorial, it struck chill as an observation room in a police-station. Not that the surroundings were materially uncomfortable—our cabin was clean and the food quite eatable, though the national efficiency gave out in the matter of electric lights and fans, and we had the greatest difficulty in getting light and coolness in our sleeping quarters. But suspicion was in the air. Our outgoings and incomings were noted, those with whom we spoke, even the things we talked about. On a little boat this was simply maddening.

In my case espionage was never lifted. Like the prisoner of Reading Gaol they watched me when I tried to eat, if not to pray, and hounded me to and from the bathroom with repulsive punctuality.

## NEW JAPAN

And all because I was a journalist who had come to Japan *via* China!

The awful implication of secret service hung over me like an ancestral ghost. At any moment I felt the glum-faced steward or the mechanized purser might turn into a flying-fox or a scaly demon. The climax came at Moji, the first port we touched on our three days' voyage. To begin with we were roused at 5 A.M. for medical inspection. Cholera had broken out in Tientsin and every passenger was suspect. We waited in the saloon till six, when we were dismissed without so much as being looked at by a doctor, though we heard he had passed down the alleyway.

This procedure I might say was not due to medical slackness; the necessary laboratory tests had already been gone through. We were lined up just to show the might of Japan. Barely had we settled back in our bunks when we were dragged out to interview the passport people. The other passengers were dismissed with a short if intensive interview—Japan always welcomes pleasure-tourists. As a writer I was a different proposition. They put me through an examination compared with which the third degree is a mere pleasantry. My past history, my future intentions, my proposed itinerary were canvassed exhaustively, together with the political opinions of all the papers for which I had ever written.

At last I lost patience, and suggested that perhaps the simplest way to track me would be to take my fingerprints. I had taken the precaution of securing strong official introductions from the Japanese Embassy in London to the national authorities, endorsed by their representative in Peking. But these availed me nothing and seemed indeed to land me deeper in the interrogative mire. I was on the Press, I had been to China, *ergo* I was a spy.

The spy mania, like the cholera scare, is rampant in Japan, and it was not until I produced some personal letters from a distinguished Japanese resident in London

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that the officials began to lose their fear, though even then they copied down each name and address in their little notebooks. Compared with the courtesy of the Chinese authorities when we landed at Shanghai Japan made a very bad show.

There was a similar hold-up by the Customs at Kobe where we disembarked. Bunny had with her a duly labelled bottle of Fruit Salts, which the excise officer immediately suspected. Salt is contraband in Japan and the name excited suspicion. He pounced upon the bottle.

“It is stomachic medicine,” explained a kindly Jap in the crowd. But that made matters worse.

“Poison?” queried the official.

Bunny shook her head and to inspire confidence dipped her finger in the salts and swallowed a few grains.

But still he was not satisfied, and pouring a considerable portion on the palm of his hand he pushed it into his mouth. Froth and confusion, stuttering and bubbles! He literally foamed at the mouth and so funny was the spectacle that the crowd shrieked with joy, and we were let through.

Kobe has all the attraction of an Eastern seaport with its dark and secret little bars, foul-smelling streets, and the odd mixture of the two civilizations, Western and national. All the business and professional men wear lounge-suits in the streets; the women and the students retain the national *kimono*. Never have I been more disappointed than when I saw Japanese beauties at close range. The prints and postcards of the country have standardized the women as exquisite flower-like creatures, encased in graceful costumes. Shades of Victorian flannel petticoats, cumbersome skirts and heavy body garments—what a preposterous method of upholstery the *kimono* outfit is! Young girls in their early teens are indeed delightful, like bright-plumaged birds in the sun. But in adolescence the full weight of a heavy sartorial burden settles on the figure.

The *obi*, or sash, broadly engirdling the waist, ends in

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a cushion at the back made of wool or horsehair, a steel busk keeping the sash in place with a tight cord. The *kimono*, of cotton *crêpe* or silk, according to the income, is worn over an underlining supplemented by thick *lingerie*. The legs of the Japanese women are a tragedy. The heavy wooden clogs for outdoor wear, the shuffle necessary to propel them, have thickened the ankles out of all semblance to grace. Added to this a virtuous woman must never allow the folds of her *kimono* to fall apart in the front, and in order to retain the proper angle of the garment she has to walk with turned-in feet, which produces pigeon-toe. The general habit of sitting on the legs has stunted the national physique, and this causes a curious lack of proportion, intensified in the case of woman by her heavy masses of hair, which, piled up high, gives a top-heavy look. The children trot along quite happily in gymnasium dress during school hours, but in the homes they revert to the *kimono* style.

We did not study British supremacy in Kobe. In preference to the European hotel we went to a cheery little American place at half the cost, run by an amazing person with forty-five years' experience of Japan. The dining-room is decorated with the portraits of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln wreathed round with the Stars and Stripes. Mine host salutes these symbols of his country's greatness with uplifted hand each night, linking them in his praises of the women of Japan for their sacrificial devotion, their lovely moral worth. He has not quite so high an opinion of the men—but we may let that pass! A jolly place is the Samborn and has flourished for years.

Our first view of Kobe at night was like a glimpse of fairyland. From the surrounding hills, thickly wooded, streamed a cascade of light. Long lines of electric lamps festooned the heights, swooped down into the valleys, glittered like stars on the horizon. Japan has electrified her country most efficiently; with her vast waterpower she

has installed electric trams, trains, and light, and many of her factories are worked by power. Moto Machi, Kobe's main street, decorative by day, is fantastically lovely in the evening. There are none of the streaming banners which adorn the Chinese cities, but electric standards at regular intervals curve towards the centre of the road, as willow wands from which bright globes of light depend like fruit upon a magic tree. You pass between the graceful branches along a thoroughfare which, reserved for pedestrians, is thick with humanity.

Shops of all kinds and prices attract the passer-by. Old prints, modern photographs, cheap and repulsive examples of jewellery, side by side with lovely bits of porcelain, lacquer, Satsuma ware, and old *netsukes*. Silk *kimonos* for European wear jostle cotton garments, standardized in pattern and of the genus that floods our English shops. Curiously enough, the price of these articles is higher in Japan than at home, the reason being that the Government subsidizes the export trade, no sacrifice being too great to secure a fresh market.

Up and down the streets the clatter of the clogs—curiously reminiscent of old Lancashire—goes on till the early hours of the morning, when at long last the shops close and the toy-sellers, the mask-modellers, the itinerant vendors of dwarf trees and miniature gardens, pack up and go home. These street merchants are a great feature in Japanese provincial towns, and their wares, marvels of ingenuity, invariably collect a crowd of men.

The country round Kobe is very pretty, and methods of transport are amazingly cheap. The trains, run on the American corridor system, are excellent. Indeed, from a pleasure point of view Japan is most desirable. It is when you delve beneath the tourist surface that you find what a thin veneer is spread over her ancient sores.

Japan claims a high level of sanitation and health regulations, and to casual visitors the cleanliness of the trams and trains, the excellence of the railway cooking, bears out

the contention. But though a barber is compelled to wear a shield before his mouth to protect his clients from possible breath germs, outside Tokyo there is no main drainage system, and in Kobe as in Osaka, the huge industrial centre, municipal carts promenade the streets at all hours of the day collecting the household sewage from open and disgusting receptacles, though officially such collection should take place before sunrise.

Meanwhile loud-speakers broadcast health hints all over the country. The same amazing difference between apparent hygiene and underlying conditions goes on in every direction. The overcrowding in certain parts is intense, and as Japan in relation to China is quite miniature the olfactory results are worse. On the other hand, the narrowest alley-way with the foulest smell is well illuminated. General dentistry seems excellent; gold teeth flash in every class.

But through all the light and the colour, the women's *kimonos* and parasols, the men's Western clothes and bowler-hats, I was conscious of an alien regard. The people were not unfriendly, they were afraid. In place of the ready greeting of China we experienced furtive looks and swift evasions. English is understood but little by the common people, and their mentality is too slow-moving to respond quickly to signs. In Kobe, as in most ports, there is a kind of *lingua anglica*, but it is only in the shops that you hear it freely spoken. Every *geisha*, *café* waitress, domestic *amah*, and hotel servant is a police informant as to the doings of the foreigner. I do not mean that the law compels them to act as agents, but it is better for them if they do so, both politically and socially. More than once I realized that my movements were discussed by the hotel chambermaid with an official person—in other words a detective in plain clothes. And this although our itinerary was in no sense secret.

But Japan rules by fear. The political oppression of the people is extreme. The mildest discussion on Communism

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is punished by imprisonment, as an attempt to overthrow the Constitution! Not only is the individual offender sent to gaol, but very often his family also. Any kind of labour demonstration is prohibited and effective trade unionism is practically suspended. Underlying this repression is a certain ferment of revolution, but held down so tightly that it has little chance of expression. The weakest liberalism is taboo, and men like Kagowa, the Christian philosopher, famous for his humanity, have been forbidden to write for the Press or make public speeches.

I gained my information from many sources, Western and national, but even more convincing than any spoken word were my actual experiences. The reality of enslavement met me in one of the largest cotton-mills of Osaka.

The conditions—ventilation and machine-guarding—were as good as those of Wuchang or Manchester. The fundamental difference lay in the treatment of the employees. Here were no chattering, laughing family groups, with *Ma* surrounded by her babies. The workers, mostly young girls between fifteen and eighteen, slim-fingered, silent attendants on giant looms and revolving bobbins, have no home life.

The female operatives sleep and live and have their being in the mills. In the group I visited the accommodation was excellent. The sleeping quarters were airy, the mats which serve throughout the country as beds were soft and clean. The canteen building was comfortable and roomy. The girls had a club, an amusement park, a gymnasium and—added the manager enthusiastically—a swimming-pool. The conditions are in every physical respect a hundred per cent. better than the girls would probably get at home. But, as I felt I should like to point out, the prisoners of Holloway Gaol have all these advantages, but would barter every one of them for liberty.

For these girls are bought from their parents for a period of three years, during which time they are the flesh-and-blood chattels of their employers, who, should they escape,



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have power to enforce their return. The amount paid to the parents is pitifully small, and though in certain mills pocket-money is given it can only be spent within the compounds of the mill. The system is general throughout the cotton trade of Japan, and in the No. 2 and No. 3 type of mill, as apart from the No. 1, the standard of living is much lower, and in spite of a rigorous censorship stories now and again leak into the Press as to the beatings and starvation, mental wracking and physical cruelty in these places, necessary to whip up the flagging energies of the unhappy girls working from sixteen to eighteen hours out of the twenty-four.

I sensed the feeling of desolation the cutting off of family ties must bring to those pathetic figures who in place of the woods and hillsides of their homes are confined day after day, month after month, in their place of labour. So much is said, so much believed in regard to Japan's modern civilization, that few people realize how nearly she has perpetuated the conditions of our worst industrial era. For these young things are but children of a very little older growth. For them the cherry and the pear blossom in vain, the glory of maple, the flowering of chrysanthemum pass them by; their only spring and summer are the factory walls.

Moreover, this system of slave labour has effectually killed the British cotton export trade. The law requires a child to be at school until fourteen and prohibits employment under that age. But in many cases families are too poor to send their children to school—there is no free education—and in the absence of inquiry they can work unimpeded. Also, according to Japanese reckoning, a child is a year old on the day he is born, so that twelve with us is well on the way to fourteen with them.

I do not wish to suggest that Japanese parents are necessarily callous. The girls are bought from the peasants who groan under such heavy taxation that they cannot afford to eat the rice they grow, but are compelled to fall back

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on sweet potatoes and second-crop barley. The policy of militarism, enforced by the Fascist group at present in power, grinds the faces of the people almost to starvation, so that in desperation they are driven to barter their own flesh and blood. Even under Japan's iron administration there are murmurs and protests, but as soon as the country grows restive the Government opens a new amusement park or an opera-house or plans interesting and cheap excursions where for a few *sen* spent in railway-fares the people may forget.

We had arrived in Japan on the first day of the Feast of Lanterns, when the souls of the dead are believed to return to their earthly home. It is an ancient Buddhist festival pre-dating modern Shintoism. In China the children float the cup-like lotus leaves each with a lighted candle down the rivulets and the canals, and all the countryside brings out its paper lanterns. Japan is also *en fête*, but her unrivalled electric installation supersedes the paper lanterns—flowers, dragons, suns and moons—save in the country districts. It was a happy chance that brought our visit at this time, and we had an intimate view of the effective way in which Japan organizes her days of remembrance.

Kobe is within a short railway journey of Kyoto, a one-time capital of Japan. Very old and very beautiful, her temples are preserved with meticulous care. It is at Kyoto also that each successive Emperor is crowned. No matter what the Imperial splendour with which the new ruler is enthroned at Tokyo, he must repair to the temple of his forefathers for a second ceremonial.

By this time we had joined forces with a delightful American and a British nursing sister who was on leave from India. The American had spent many years in China and was now on his way to retirement in his native home at Seattle. By reason of his gentle manners and unfailing courtesy, his patience with feminine unpunctuality and mislaid railway-tickets, we called him the Master, nominating him as leader of our expeditions.

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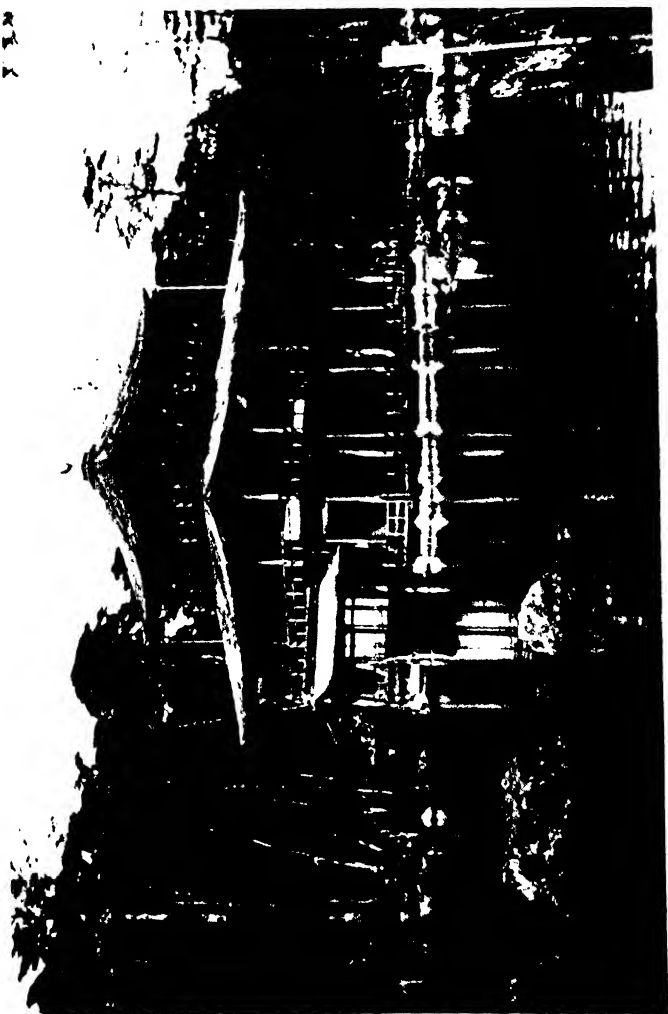
We arrived at Kyoto to find the city full of processions *en route* for the temples in the hills. We felt a trifle lost, when suddenly there fell upon us an amazing person. With a wide smile he extended his card, which bore the remarkable name of Tom G. Yosh. A man of mixed origins, Mr Yosh is somewhere Japanese, though his linguistic abilities far outstep those of his compatriots.

"Good morning," said he. "You will see the Golden Pavilion, the Silver Pavilion, and all the sights of Kyoto, returning to my hotel for lunch."

This sounded a little expensive and we declined the proposition. But Yosh was equal to any emergency and after a hurried discussion with a taxi-driver returned to the Master and speedily came to amazingly cheap terms. He was, I should say, a rare genius in the art of finance. We gathered he had succeeded in getting for us one of the lowest of the five prices which in Japan govern tourist rates.

That was a memorable drive. The narrow roads winding from the town to the hillsides were massed with people, the women with babies strapped on their backs, the men walking slightly in advance to enforce masculine supremacy. All of them were bound for one or other of the huge temples, there to pray, make offerings of flowers and incense, and set up paper streamers, testimonies to the virtue of the dead.

Our first stopping-place was a great temple with a giant Buddha. The place and grounds were full of worshippers. In a deep pool of clear water three devotees in long white gowns stood motionless, immersed up to their armpits. They might, Yosh explained, so remain for hours. Before the Buddha women bent in reverence, touching their foreheads to the floor. Ancestral shrines were crowded, and the scribes kept busy writing out charms against the devils which colour life throughout Japan. The buildings were Chinese in design, as indeed is all Japanese temple architecture. In Kobe as in other towns Western housing is



THE GOLDEN PAVILION

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"CLOAKS OF BAMBOO STRAW"

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established; not until you get into the villages do you meet the traditional little houses with the sliding paper screens.

We asked through Yosh for official permission to take photographs—the police are never very far away—and received the same. Alas, it was not of much value! We had some very interesting snapshots and being curious to see how they would come out took them with some other films to be developed. When we called for the prints we received the contents of only four rolls. What had happened to the other two? With a polite smile we were informed that we had made a mistake—we had never delivered them—and this though we had the original receipt. Finally we were told that the rolls must have been blank—but the virgin films were not available! It is impossible to get past a Japanese denial. You know just when and how they lie to you, but nothing will shift them from their position. Yosh, in his breezy internationalism—he had spent years in the States—was an amazing contrast.

From the temple we went to the Golden Pavilion; set in a beautiful park, with an ornamental lake designed by a famous landscape-gardener, every artificial aid to natural loveliness has been explored. It was my first impact with Japanese open-air decoration, and it was a delight to see how every nook and cranny—a clump of trees here, and slender willow there—blended in a central design. Every beauty-spot throughout the countryside is given the same treatment. A bend in a road reveals an exquisitely tidy view, a woodland glade shows a vista pruned and shaped to the last leaf; as the twig is trained so does the foliage grow. At last, surfeited with art, I longed for a riot of nature. I would have given very much for a sudden and unfettered blossoming.

Near the Golden Pavilion—once an Imperial tea-house, now a faded symbol of old times—lies the Buddhist monastery at which the reigning Abbot sets the Imperial crown on each successive royal head. It is a favourite resort of

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other members of the Royal Family, who go annually into retreat for prayer and meditation. Some have finally joined the Order, forsaking the world, and pass their days in this peaceful and well-beloved spot.

A most gracious building, the mechanized spirit of modern Japan has left it untouched. You pass through wide doors over a floor which, specially sprung, gives a kind of musical response to your tread. It is known as the Nightingale Floor and leads to a series of long, low rooms which, opening from each other, form a miracle of beauty. For every room has its separate scheme of decoration, to which the ancient artists of Japan devoted their whole lives. From a bamboo forest so real that the pictured trees seem to give actual shade you enter a cherry grove agleam with faint stars, and on to the stork chamber where the birds are poised in their flight to the iris room with its glowing blue and purple, yellow and white. There is no furniture to distract the eyes from these masterpieces of line and colour. The floors are covered with bamboo mats, and in the royal chamber a solitary chair is set upon a dais.

The Abbot, a venerable priest nearly a hundred years old, as Yosh informed us, still occasionally appears to bless his people. He and the rest of the monks—this is a celibate order—were in quarters not open to visitors; we were, however, privileged to attend service in the temple.

At the foot of a long flight of steps we exchanged our shoes for felt slippers. This is a ceremony observed not only in regard to places of worship, but in private homes. Only the most Westernized Japanese retain their outdoor footwear inside domestic walls.

The service, like that of the Yellow Lamas, was simple but ceremonial. Acolytes waved incense, a choir of postulants chanted, the high priest intoned. There is an external similarity between the Buddhist and the Catholic ritual as with the observance of certain Holy Days—the idea of the Feast of Lanterns is closely allied with All

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Souls. The congregation were devout and most serious. The Japanese are not a light-hearted people, even outside their temples. I found none of that joyous gaiety which characterizes China. Life for most is set to a heavy measure, the reason for which I discovered later in the roots of their philosophy.

It was just on one o'clock when at last we came back to the town with its winding streets, curious baronial-looking houses, and gay amusement parks.

Yosh suddenly became communicative. He indicated to the Master that he had gone forth from the hotel, of which he was head porter, to seek guests. But alas, it was out of season, and we had no intention of remaining in Kyoto for the night. It followed therefore that if we refused to return for luncheon he would have spent the morning in vain! But if we agreed—he smiled, revealing an entire set of gold teeth—and the Master gave in. Meanwhile the cost of the car, plus a *douceur* to Yosh for his services as guide, was handed over to that intrepid sportsman, who had secured a morning's outing, a good tip—and clients for his hotel—as a result of initiative!

We followed him into a huge and aggressively modern building, where the manager received us—after a few sharp looks at Yosh—and despatched us to the luncheon-room. Not here were lovely paintings of bamboo, flying storks, and cherry blossom; the cold utility of the profit-making *restaurateur*, West or East as the case may be, reigned supreme. Pretty Japanese waitresses brought the *menu*, iced water, and the hot perfumed towels in vogue at every meal. If possible the heat was greater than in China, while the atmosphere was heavier—you are never very far from the sea coast. The food, extremely Western, was excellent. The Master enjoyed a steak, we ate chicken, and our friend the nurse, a convinced vegetarian, nibbled lettuce and insisted she felt content if not replete. Figures in lounge-suits and the national *kimono* flitted in and out, meeting in male parties at the tables. The masculine



manner is not ingratiating—unlike the feminine method of approach, which is designed to please. In nothing do the Chinese and Japanese differ more than in the manner of salutation. The Chinese bows with a courtesy that recognizes his own as your right to social dignity. The Japanese to me symbolizes something different. Rubbing his knees with his hands he bends almost to the waist, accompanying this greeting by the intake of the breath which courtesy insists must not be exhaled. I have been told that this rather lowly form of greeting is the one observed in temples and, carried into civic life, denotes that the person you approach is raised *pro tem.* to the status of a god.

Over luncheon we discussed our plans. Our ultimate objective was Tokyo, with country explorations in between. The Master and our compatriot, *en route* for America, were not joining their ship for some days, so we decided to continue our pilgrimage from Kyoto to Nara of the Hills, an even older and more famous religious spot, and Japan's first capital. To do this, however, it was necessary to pick up our luggage from the electric-railway station and go over to the steam-line *dépôt*. And this occasioned a partial revolt against our leader. The Master, manlike, was easy-going and disinclined to argue over *sen*—of which a hundred go to the *yen*, then equal to about one shilling and threepence in English money. Our Florence Nightingale, however, lavishly generous in other matters, had a grouch against transport costs and insisted that we each took a package. The porter would then only have two, by which means we should save our communal fund  $7\frac{1}{2}d.$  at least! We did not want to carry anything, and the number of *sen* to be saved seemed utterly out of proportion to the toil, but a woman is not a sister of a hospital for nothing, and eventually she had us trotting along like coolies at her heels.

And then at the other end Nemesis descended. The scale of charges was not, as in China, so much per package but entailed a minimum cost of a *yen*, which in spite of

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protest the Master shelled out. I regret to say that in a gross betrayal of sex-loyalty Bunny and I backed him up rejoicing. A slim man, with humorous eyes and the kindest mouth, he had a love of things Chinese which at odd moments, when we should have been admiring the Japanese landscape, he and I discussed.

Nara is lovely and small and exquisite, like a rose in the heart of a green hill, beyond which other heights appear crowned with leafy trees until the eye, lost in a maze of foliage, falls back to the lowest tier. You need not be a mountaineer to scale these adventurous peaks. The Government is careful of your comfort, and rope railways and electric cars run up and down all day. Restaurants and *cafés*, sports grounds and swimming-pools, await you at the top, or there are temples, lofty, magnificent; wayside shrines, small and beatific; delightful tea-gardens, where you may take your ease.

Transport covers the country most efficiently. The smallest village is linked up with its district town by rail or tram or bus. Every town has taxi-cabs; they are on the whole cheaper than jin-rickshas, which are almost extinct. Only in the islands of the North, sparsely populated and industrially undeveloped, is there any lack of locomotion.

The hotel at Nara, State-owned and run like the railways, is cheap, comfortable, and admirably ordered. The Master, stealing a march on British efficiency, arranged inclusive terms at a little less than Florence Nightingale anticipated, which was a score for American independence.

It was in the evening, from the hotel park, that the full sorcery of the Japanese genius for effect broke in on us. From the top of a hill we looked down on a sea of light, running in waves from a lake with an illuminated fountain, through gardens of tall trees, touching small shrines, tea-houses, and kiosks, to the pagoda of the Great Temple outlined against the sky.

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A flare of leaping flames arose from a giant bonfire, answered by lesser lights from the neighbouring heights. We hastened to the bonfire, fed by an eager crowd, through a fascinating little street on to an open booth where to the accompaniment of drums, cymbals, and pipes *geisha* were swaying like willow wands in the Bon dance. Exotic creatures in wonderful *kimonos* and floating sashes—the absence of the bunched bow at the back denotes their status—they are engaged by hotel-keepers to perform the traditional dances of the country. The Cherry in spring and Bon in August are two of the chief occasions. There is no dancing as we understand it, merely a series of pleasantly monotonous swayings of the body and wreathings of the hands.

From the *geisha* we found our way to an amusement park, with open-air roller-skating. The rink was full and every one in Western dress; within a stone's throw were alluring tea-houses with gramophones at full tilt; mysterious, seductive little places with bead curtains at the doors, behind which intriguing shadows swiftly passed. Pedlars offered clever little toys for sale and bunches of the red berries we call cape-gooseberries, which are used by Japanese children as toy lanterns.

And over all the curious noises of the night, drowning the gramophones, the clatter of the clogs, veiling the beauty of the sky, the shimmering of the fountain, was the voice of the loud-speaker broadcasting the news of the day.

A ballet of colour and motion, perfectly produced, the scene at Nara is reduplicated all over Japan throughout the summer. On that night of the Feast of Lanterns I felt as though I had stumbled on a magic island. But beyond the *kimono* and the landscape gardens, the glitter and the gaiety, I sensed the chill of perilous seas forlorn; it was very lovely, but, like other and older fairylands, Japan to me seemed not quite human.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE CHRYSANTHEMUM OF SIXTEEN PETALS

NARA was not quite so ravishing in the daylight; the squalor of the streets peered through. But the woods around were perfectly swept—I had almost said dusted—and the golden maples, just beginning to turn red, made a brave show. Tall birches, rare pines, rose above our heads, everything was suave and *svelte*, but, unregenerate that I am, I longed for a touch of tangled undergrowth, an outbreak of briar.

The Master rather shared my desire, but Bunny and Florence Nightingale approved the orderliness of the landscape, so adequately indexed and filed. Numbers of small villages lie round the district; the houses, two-storied, with a high steep staircase, are very clean and most diminutive. There is very little furniture and everything is squat beyond European belief. The tables are not more than twelve inches from the ground, and seats there are none; the nationals sit upon their haunches for meals, to read and to work or to follow their employments. This custom, which undoubtedly impairs the national physique, inducing curiously disproportioned legs, has been dropped in the schools, where the children sit up straight. Sliding screens of paper or parchment divide up the rooms according to the size required. The beds are mats and the dressing-tables—if the family be rich enough to afford such a luxury—consist of a looking-glass which stands on the floor, with a tiny drawer for toilet accessories. The decoration scheme is simple but effective—a bowl, a single print,

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a branch of foliage, gives the keynote to a room. In the guest chamber a tiny alcove between carved or painted pillars holds some special ornament, often very lovely—always on the floor. Even in the poorest place the decorative sense remains.

To me a Japanese house, though very charming, is like *Alice in Wonderland*; even the electric switches and bell-pushes are so close to the ground that I had a desire to return to the primitive and crawl around.

The poverty in the country was pinching and apparent. Unemployment in the cities has driven a large percentage of workers back to their native place, where the people, already underfed, find it increasingly difficult to cope with the influx. We watched the workers in the *padi*-fields, ankle-deep in the fructifying water. In Japan as in China the peasants protect themselves against the weather with hats and cloaks of bamboo straw.

The national depression was evident. Occasionally after considerable precautions we induced some of those who could speak a little English to talk to us.

The people as a whole are not militarist. I found no public feeling against China or in favour of continued hostilities. But the militarist or Fascist party control the situation. The Government has no authority over the foreign policy, the Army, or the Navy of Japan; the responsibility for all these rests directly with the Emperor, whose present advisers are openly pro-war. So strong is their influence that neither financiers nor business men, who desire peace, retrenchment, and reform, have sufficient strength to oppose them.

In Japan the soldier is definitely on top.

But as yet we lingered on our way to the militarist centre of Tokyo. The countryside had its sweetly neat attractions. I remember, on the morning of the last of the three Days of Remembrance, when the souls of the dead start on their return journey to the other world, we watched a very happy scene. On the shores of a lake under a cherry-

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tree a little elderly man was standing, a butterfly-net in hand. Motionless and intent, he waited for a cicada to alight, when like a streak the net descended—only to miss by a hair's breadth! Again and yet again he tried, and at long last succeeded, and the creature, with a noise like a cab whistle, was transferred to a tiny wicker cage in triumph. These insects are national pets; no trouble is too great to secure them!

Quite close to the cicada-catcher were an old gentleman and a small boy solemnly fishing. They never seemed to get a bite, but, under the shade of a small black umbrella on a long bamboo pole, enjoyed themselves prodigiously. There is a superabundance of black umbrellas and bowler-hats in Japan, utterly out of place in a *kimono* world and deliciously ridiculous.

The general diet of the peasantry—when they can afford it—is rice, with a great variety of fish and vegetables. Crisp little biscuits and small cakes, made in full public view, are on sale, and you may buy mineral waters—though under suspicion of their labels! Bottles of whisky, I am told, may also be purchased, but with the same dubiety. An Englishman told me he had seen bottles of well-known brands in all their virgin innocence, only the mystic addition of the tag “1925 vintage” made them suspect. At the restaurants fish appears raw, in salads, stewed and fried with strips of meat dipped in beaten egg and eaten with *sake*—a variant of *samsu*. But the Japanese usually entertain Westerners to European food, which everywhere is admirably cooked.

The Japanese village repeats itself in style and architecture. The main street has its shops, its bath-house and tea-house. Bathing is communal between the sexes alike in outdoor swimming-pools and under cover; but as a nation they are fastidious in personal cleanliness; even when they plunge and splash in full enjoyment of their bountiful lakes and streams, there is a gravity of demeanour which turns the jolliest *fête* into an official

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occasion. One feels a systematized reason behind the most exuberant act.

This is even more apparent in the cities.

I remember one morning when very early we went to a flower-show just outside Osaka. It was a competition for the best specimen of Morning Glory, and, as this exquisitely fragile bloom of a day withers under the sun, proceedings had to start at seven in the morning. We arrived at a little temple sacred to the Children's Buddha with hundreds of tiny images each in their small niche. The judge was a Buddhist priest, a specialist in horticulture, before whom were ranged Morning Glories of all shapes and colours, from the freak variety with tiny spider-like claws to the beautiful velvety blossom measuring four inches across. It was a pretty sight, and I watched the men carry in their final efforts with genuine admiration. How many hours of patient experimentation had those small tradesmen, artisans, and labourers devoted to the raising of those ephemeral beauties! There must, I felt, be an underlying impulse to that pursuit of the beautiful which makes for the finest art.

But even as I admired, the scene changed. An official distributed forms, lined up the exhibitors in queues, imparting a curious atmosphere of standardization which made the whole thing seem unreal. Always I sensed this underlying regimentation. At times it was as though I were compelled to watch the transformation of a simple, pleasing, if humourless people into a mechanized and slightly malignant race—malignant because the worship of the national *ego*, symbolized by the Emperor, which is the religion of New Japan, leaves little room for humanity or kindness outside.

Family life is not the unit of social culture as in China. The centre of national gravity is not the household but the throne. Ancestor-worship has been deflected to Emperor-worship, and Shintoism, which used to symbolize veneration for domestic *lares et penates*, is now synonymous with

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adoration of the immediate ruler, who at the moment is the Emperor Hirohito.

Thus it is ordained by Imperial edict that every school throughout the country should display a picture of Hirohito, the Rising Sun. Either a painted portrait, a photograph, or for poorer establishments even a newspaper reproduction will suffice; but the precious object must be saved from destruction at all costs. The duty of preservation devolves on the headmaster, even at the risk of his own life. This risk is not a small one. The majority of schools, like other buildings, are made of wood and therefore highly inflammable. In many cases the unfortunate head has been burnt to death in endeavouring to rescue the sacred symbol.

I heard an enlightening story on this point from the editor of an English daily published in Japan. A fire had broken out in a poor school which rejoiced in the cheapest possible reprint of the Imperial likeness from a popular paper. In striving to rescue the fragment the schoolmaster was burnt to death.

“Remembering the base uses to which newspapers are frequently put,” said the editor, “I drew attention in my columns to the enormity of sacrificing human life for the sake of a piece of newsprint—even though it reproduced the Emperor’s face. I was summoned forthwith to appear before the Procurateur.

“‘You have committed not only high treason,’ said he, ‘but blasphemy, with reference to the recent fire.’

“‘Blasphemy!’ I repeated.

“‘Most certainly,’ he answered. ‘Learn that the Emperor is not the symbol of divinity, but divinity itself. He is the supreme being whom we worship, and it is the duty and the privilege of every one of his subjects to lay down their life to preserve his pictured lineaments, no matter how crudely they may be presented. It is sacrilege to suggest that human life is more important than the picture of the Emperor. Had you been a national, you would



have suffered the extreme penalty. As it is '—the Procurateur paused—' I fine you fifty yen,' said he."

My friend the editor felt it was a cheap let-off.

It was at Kyoto once again that we parted from the Master and Florence Nightingale. That redoubtable woman had acquired the knack of quelling porters with her eye—or rather, she thought she had. My explanation of the reduced transport charges was that the Master, who had a way of lurking about unseen, inevitably added a *pourboire* to the amount she handed over! Bound for Kobe to rejoin their ship, they waved farewells to us—on the train to Tokyo.

That was an amazing journey. The coach held sixty passengers whose places, for a special booking fee, were reserved. Beautifully clean, the floor was swept every few minutes, electric fans went at full tilt, and attendants with ice-cream, fruit, and other light refreshments wandered up and down. And then in this immediately Western setting an astounding thing occurred. From all parts of the coach, men of every age arose and, with infinite gravity, proceeded to divest themselves of clothing. First the coat, then the waistcoat, followed by the trousers, were taken off and handed to a waiting wife or sister, who folded them neatly and placed them in a suit-case. In some cases shirt and pants followed suit, the little Japs appearing semi-nude until they draped themselves in *kimonos*, put on slippers, and settled down in comfort and ease. The women did not undress, but, squatting on the floor, amused the children, also disrobed, and waited on their lords. The whole proceeding was gone through with complete unconcern. This entire lack of body consciousness—amounting almost to contempt—occasionally has queer results. There is no necessity for nudist colonies in Japan—nudism is an accepted fact which on occasions strikes an odd social note, as when on the beach at Kobe a group of naked fishermen hauling in the nets were surrounded by interested lookers-on in Western attire.

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Lunch made a very pleasant break in our nine hours' journey. The *menu* was varied, the cooking admirable, in utter contrast to our shameful main line service at home, and at half the cost. Those who did not wish to take the full meal were served with separate luncheon-boxes, complete with chow, chop-sticks, and *papier-mâché* spoons.

It was late in the evening when we arrived at Tokyo and, following the Master's advice, went straight to the station hotel, which, under State management, is cheap and excellently run.

Tokyo has nothing of traditional Japan. Rebuilt after the earthquake of 1923, it suggests a Western city in the United States, with a dash of cosmopolitanism thrown in. Of all her buildings Tokyo is proudest of the heterogeneous Imperial Hotel. It has several claims to distinction. Planned on the lines of South-American-cum-Spanish, it has a big courtyard, deep arches, and huge brick walls. Moreover, it escaped the earthquake unscathed, though the shock slightly altered the alignment of the lower floor. An unutterable hotch-potch, it is the social centre of the city, Western and national; and here we went to the luncheon-party given by Dr Baty, the British barrister who acts as legal adviser to the Japanese Foreign Office. An old friend of my husband's, he is remembered in law and journalistic circles at home, but his interests and devotions at the moment belong to his adopted country. Like other Englishmen immured in Eastern culture he is more Japanese than the most patriotic Jap; he can give the most amazing presentments, in perfect Japanese, of national figures, from a famous daughter of the Samurai to a popular knock-about comedian.

I met at lunch a most delightful Japanese gentleman, the editor of a national paper and some-time correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*. He spoke English extraordinarily well, and discussed his country's future development, not politically or socially, but in regard to art.

"I wish," said he, "that you could have visited Tokyo

in ten years' time. By then we may have achieved something national in our architecture. As it is, we are in chaos. We are discarding our Chinese roots for every kind of experimental building. We have even included a Gothic arch—after your Oxford style—in one of our colleges." He smiled wistfully. "Down in our amusement quarter we are American Bowery, and in our parks and open spaces European."

I should have liked a heart-to-heart talk with that courteous and intelligent Japanese. But only behind a closed door can you ever hope to glean a little of the undercurrent of life—and even then the door, generally in hotels, is liable suddenly to burst open. Meanwhile external facts and figures are furnished to inquiring British and other journalists by Dr Baty, who saves them the trouble of learning to speak the language or to understand its system of ideography.

Later that afternoon we were taken round the city by an official of the Ministry of Information. I looked in vain on that exquisite summer morning for the small shops and dolls' houses of the country, the queer intimacy of Kobe, the curious medievalism that still permeates the outskirts of Osaka. The shops are all mammoth stores, like a gigantic Woolworth's or multi-storeyed Selfridge's. The goods are Westernized and cheap, though in shops like those of Yamanaka or Nomura, the famous dealers, I saw rare and lovely things. The commercialism of Japan has radically affected her craftsmanship. Only in a few sections does she still retain supremacy—her prints, her bronzes, and her lacquer.

Modern artists still retain the old convention of building a composition round an object which, unlovely in itself, gains beauty by its treatment, and to-day Hasui achieves miracles of light and shade with telegraph-poles in a sheet of rain.

Hand embroidery has largely given place to machine stitch, and those exquisite little ivory figures—*netsukes*, as

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they are called—which used to hang on the *kimono* girdle, with medicine-case attached, are reproduced to-day in a cheap and vulgar form.

Tokyo, though without atmosphere, has wide streets and amazing parks, with every kind of sports ground and games centre—swimming-pools and gymnasiums are also included, and hundreds of business-men, students, and schoolboys solemnly and ceremoniously exercise therein. Association football, baseball, lawn-tennis, are all in the programme. Japan was terribly excited at the time we were there by her success at the Olympic Games. That she should have won distinction in the field of jumping went to her head. The amazing thing about the national attitude was her inability to understand why England was not in the dust at defeat! It seems impossible for these serious-minded people to regard anything as a mere game. Always there must be an underlying purpose. In this case it is the achievement of world-wide jumping prowess.

From the parks we went to Yoshiwara, where in the old days little harlots used to be on exhibition in iron cages. Man paid his money and took his choice. The cages are now abolished, but the attitude towards womanhood which they symbolized remains, as in my inquiries I later discovered. Cinemas abound, not only American but national; the latter specialize in the ancient and honourable tradition of the duel—terrific combats are staged and much screen gore is splashed. Then there are shooting booths and competition palaces with innumerable games of the ball-and-slot variety. Hampstead Heath on a Bank Holiday would fill the bill but for the lack of spontaneity in the people.

I have never been in a city with less personality or temperament. It was not, indeed, until our guide took us to the Shinto shrine in the Central Park that I realized where New Japan is trending. Only in her Buddhist temples does she conserve her ancient customs, her heritage of beauty. But even here she is moving from her old

faith towards a closer union with her new, of which the Shinto shrines are the immediate expression.

You find these shrines in every city and occasionally in the countryside, but the one at Tokyo remains for me the most complete materialization of the religion for which it stands. The shrine is set in a lovely suburb of the park; you enter by high bronze gates surmounted by the sixteen-petalled chrysanthemum, the insignia of the Royal House, in gold, and pass through a phalanx of trees, planted after the earthquake by the children of the Empire, who gave their pocket-money for the purpose, till on a gradually rising ascent you reach a *torii*, or flying gate, a feature of Japanese religious architecture and pastoral design. Here you pause and purify yourself by dipping the hands in running water. Beyond the *torii* stretches a flight of stone steps, surmounted by a deep archway with massive pillars, between which at the base is stretched a canvas sheet in which the faithful drop their coins. Beyond this again, at the end of a long vista, rises a small pavilion with closed doors.

“Once a year the doors open and the Emperor himself appears to all the waiting thousands. Men, women, and children prostrate themselves before him.”

It was the official from the Ministry who told us this, and the note in his voice made me realize that to him, as to millions of his fellow-countrymen, the Imperial visitation was as the presence of God in the Ark of the Covenant. In truth, in very truth, the Emperor is God, and his will is holy law, to resist which is to defame the national ancestors of whom he is the visible sign.

There is a fundamental distinction between these shrines and the Buddhist temples. Shintoism—I give the Japanese definition—is the worship of the Imperial Family, which involves ancestor-worship and needs no external ritual. The shrines are lit up by the annual manifestation of the Emperor, whose beams as the Rising Sun extend from the Central Park in Tokyo to the uttermost ends of his king-

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dom. Thus there are no beautifully painted scrolls, no red lacquer pillars or bronze incense-burners: everything is austere, almost grimly, outlined—a framework, one feels, for the emblazonment of Imperial gold. But so deeply has the suggestion cut that day after day long lines of men and women visit the Tokyo shrine and contribute offerings, merging their consciousness in the ineffable glory of Hirohito.

It is considered out of date to be married by a Buddhist priest. Fashionable Japan celebrates the contract in a Shinto registry, which also takes note of a child's birth. But death still remains a province of the ancient order, whose priests close the eyes of Shintoist and Buddhist alike.

The adoration at the shrine, the devotion of the attendant public, the exaltation one finds, made a profound impression on me. I realized that built on a colossal materialism New Japan must be, and is, impervious to any spiritual consideration of equity or justice, either at home or abroad. The Emperor is God, all-powerful and all-righteous. His people are but the torch he carries in his hand in his work of enlightening the world.

This may sound fantastic, but it is the actual expression of the national belief as it was outlined to me by our official guide. I shall never forget his look of sublime belief as we re-passed the bronze gate surmounted by the gold chrysanthemum.

“Our Imperial dynasty has reigned in direct succession for three thousand years,” said he. I saw no reason at that moment why they should not continue to reign for three thousand more; in which case it would be interesting to know just how much of the Eastern hemisphere they will rule over!

All these things were present in my mind as we drove back through the crowded streets with their odd mixture of *kimonos* and lounge-suits, patent leather shoes and wooden clogs. In a sudden disposition to enjoy the present, we

decided to go to the Kabukiza theatre, where an exciting drama was being played.

A large building planned on Western lines, admirably lit, with comfortable seating and good acoustics, the Kabukiza has all the latest and most up-to-date accessories. Restaurants, national and European, tea-rooms, manicure—we might have been in a cinema *de luxe* at home! The house was crowded, women—all in *kimonos*—predominating. They sat with their legs tucked under them on the tip-up seats and in the boxes, with now and again a husband and father in attendance. *Geisha* occupied a special parterre, and were visited by their admirers in the interval.

I had hoped to have seen one of the famous *Nō* plays, but they belong to the winter season. In August the fashion tends to comedy and drama. That night's show was a modern rendering of an historic drama with plenty of slapstick. The production was admirable with good lighting effects and wonderful grouping. It was a revelation, to me at any rate, to learn that the revolving stage is an old device in Japan, where it is used more effectively and far more quickly than in England. Indigenous to Japan, it has become part of the art of the theatre, both from the author's and the producer's point of view, and has nothing of the sporadic effect too often suggested by its employment in our performances. The acting was a curious mixture of Japanese tradition and Western modernism. The two chief comedians—popular favourites throughout Japan, Tchi Kawi and Otani—might have been Nervo and Knox; they had played in the United States and had obviously brought back some American tricks. On the other hand, several of the settings, notably a Bon dance and a duelling scene, were traditionally perfect. The actors took the poses of an old print, every gesture had a definite artistic meaning, each movement a rhythm. None of the leading *rôles* were played by women, but they appeared in small parts and in the chorus. Cer-

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tain scenes remain in my mind as cameos of loveliness, but as a whole the performance suffered from lack of unison.

It may be that the national theatre still maintains its fine record in the winter season, but, as I see it, the Japanese stage of to-day, like the Japanese civilization, is halting between two influences—tradition and modernism—which at the moment causes acute artistic and social indigestion.



## CHAPTER XX

### THE WAY OF JAPAN WITH A MAID

**L**EGEND has painted the Japanese woman as a delicate flower set in the shrine of the home she decorates. Always she is presented in a gracious environment—tiny cottage or opulent house; her coloured raiment, like her face, shows no sign of wear and tear. Viewed from afar one feels she is the final expression of national elegance. At close range the picture changes.

The Japanese woman is the hardest worked and the most enslaved of any female proletariat. She is employed in engineering shops, raises heavy weights, drags hand-barrows, staffs the hotels, serves in the shops, is an agricultural labourer, mill-hand, on occasions coals the ships, and is used for every kind of heavy and arduous toil. Her wages are handled by her father, her husband, or her son. She is a beast of burden without any legal status or individual rights. Man is regarded as her superior socially, mentally, and morally, and for the most part she accedes to his supremacy. Moreover, she remains his chattel and slave, the property of her nearest male relation, who may—and frequently does—sell her to the highest bidder.

This is not only the case in industrialism, where, as I have explained, girls are sold to the mills, but applies equally to marriage and prostitution. Husbands are chosen after the fashion of Old China, and the wife exchanges her father's authority for her husband's. But there any similarity of treatment ends. In Japan feminine influence, politically or socially, practically does not exist. There are, of course, instances where a

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woman of Western education married to a man who has lost his prehistoric outlook may achieve a certain individual prestige. But such cases are very rare, and for the most part the women—as I met them—though possessed of the qualities of sacrifice, devotion, and unlimited endurance, are mostly negligible save as the servants of male cupidity and desire.

The brothels are a classic instance of flesh-and-blood barter. These places are recruited from the peasantry, who under the pressure of grinding need sell their daughters. Beautiful fairy-tales have been told as to the reason why young girls enter the profession of harlotry, which we are assured remains honourable in the national eyes. It is said even to-day that a girl will freely offer up her youth to save her parents from poverty, in the sure and certain hope of a return home after the years of her apprenticeship are over. I always suspected this lovely euphemism, and now I have been to Japan I am in a position totally to deny its implication. There is no going back for any girl sold into prostitution. She is under a life sentence. The Emperor Meiji, predecessor of Hirohito, issued a proclamation giving liberty to any woman or girl who should escape from a brothel. Henceforth her life was to be her own. But where the Emperor gave the law, takes. The wretched fugitive is inevitably arrested by the police on a charge of having taken the clothes provided by the establishment, and has to choose between imprisonment for debt—her 'owner' always shows a debit against her in the books—or a return to the old slavery.

The brothels are licensed by the State. This custom, as we know, is adopted by many European Powers, but Japan goes a step farther. Her revenues are recruited directly from the wages of sex traffic. The Government takes 33 per cent. of the gross receipts of every brothel, and in addition imposes a poll-tax on each unhappy victim of the system. According to the reports of both the national and British Press in Japan, some forty

thousand girls were bought in 1932 for use in Manchukuo brothels. And, according to my information, these particular traffickers were Government agents. I shall probably be reminded that I must not expect this people to have the same idea of sex as a Western nation. To which I reply that though I admit the psychology of Japan in relation to sex is fundamentally different from Europe's, the League of Nations takes the totally opposite view, for though State revenue is directly drawn from the victims of the white slave traffic the League has put Japan on the Council for its international suppression!

There is a root reason for this racial contempt of woman. The Japanese have a Manichæan distrust of the flesh. To them sexual intercourse is merely a vehicle for the reproduction of the species or a means of pleasure. It is the expression of passion, not of love, and is specifically dissociated from evidences of affection.

I had a significant insight into this attitude while we were in Kobe. Like most ports it is honeycombed with little bars and drinking-places: through reed curtains you get a glimpse of a softly lit interior, catch the sound of tinkling music and low laughter. Some of these places, externally reminiscent of West End bars, are very popular with the Western colony; others more mysteriously attractive are frequented by nationals. It was in one of the latter that with an English journalist I came right up against Japanese materialism.

It was a jolly little bar, with waitresses in attendance ready to oblige with any form of entertainment. We sat at a small table drinking beer—the national brew is excellent—and watching the crowd. From time to time a customer, after a drink and a chat, would disappear with one of the waitresses upstairs. It was all done most discreetly and mechanically, and the girls seemed to regard these interludes as part of the day's work. Presently a young man in a lounge-suit and a straw hat dropped in, ordered a drink, and, hearing us speaking English, broke into the



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same tongue. Moreover, he endeavoured to put over one of our social customs—in other words, he seized a girl's hand and asked for a kiss! I have never seen such a look of concentrated hate and loathing as she turned on him. With a cry of outrage she rushed from the bar, leaving him to appear more than a little foolish.

I turned to my friend for an explanation.

"He's insulted her," was his answer, "and not only her, but all her ancestors. A kiss is a sign of intimacy that a girl over here will not tolerate. A Japanese woman does not necessarily regard it as an affront if a man asks her to become his mistress, but if he kissed her she might quite probably commit *hara-kiri*. You see, to them sex relations should be untouched by affectional demonstration."

It was a really devastating discovery. Those charming little creatures, compelled to serve as vehicles for desire unsoftened by the least gesture of a common humanity, haunted me. . . .

It was just about this time that a series of articles contrasting Samurai tradition with European medievalism appeared in the national Press, written by a distinguished Japanese historian and translated by the local British paper. In one of these the author drew a sharp distinction between the attitude of the Knights of Christendom, who went into battle wearing their lady's favour, and the Samurai. In the first case, it was pointed out, the favour was supposed to bring glory. In the second, it was worn simply for protective purposes. The writer explained that Japanese soldiers in the Russo-Japanese war and in the recent fighting at Shanghai fastened a fragment of feminine clothing over their heart to ward off a bullet, the idea being that metal, a clean substance, would turn aside from the taint of a woman's flesh.

This particular philosophy is implicit in the national psychology equally with women as with men, and accounts, perhaps, for that suggestion of humiliated isolation

which, in spite of all their gentle gaiety and powers of entertainment, I always felt in feminine Japanese society. I looked in vain for any admission of the individual human rights of woman as mother, wife, or daughter. A woman's life is still summed up in what are known as the three obediences—father, husband, and son each in turn command implicit acquiescence.

Among the working class female subservience is of necessity not so stressed. A wife goes out with her husband and her children on a national holiday and possibly exercises a certain control over the family purse. But in all the gentler methods of man towards woman the workers, like those who are better off, signally fail. The man strides in front, the woman, burdened with babies and impedimenta, lags behind. There is nothing in Japan of the splendid virile force of the Chinese *Ma*; the sex relations in the two countries differ as widely as English customs from Hindu.

I remember on one occasion in a terribly overcrowded cable car Bunny and I gave our seats to two women, each with a baby on her back, a small child in her hand, and innumerable parcels. Judge of our disgust when the vacant places were taken not by the two women, but by their husbands, who dropped into them with a complacent grin! If a woman and children meet the head of the family at the railway-station, he will embrace the baby and the rest, but treat the wife with calm indifference, very often handing her his bag to carry.

In this particular social scheme there is little room for woman to do more than passively acquiesce in all the duties and the sacrifices required of her. Charitable work remains, and there are colleges for women in the cities, and high schools, but the tradition of inferiority cannot compete with educational attainments. Some of the students go about together, but this is not general; indeed, in the upper classes it is still a rarity for even married couples to appear in public. A man goes to

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the theatre or the sports ground with his male friends, a wife may go with her female acquaintances; the sexes do not mix. At an official reception on one occasion the hostess, a very charming woman, was obviously very tired. It was an overpoweringly hot day and her dress must have been very heavy. She looked ready to drop, but not until she had publicly asked her husband's permission to sit down did etiquette allow her to do so. In business circles a larger freemasonry is gradually growing up; married couples occasionally go out together and a few people go to dance-halls with each other. But even in these places professional partners drawn from the *geisha* are in the majority, and numbers of them wear Western dress.

The old picturesque type of *geisha* is not so sought after to-day. She appeals mainly to the older men whom she was trained to amuse. A *geisha*, bought in infancy or early childhood, is not designed primarily for prostitution, though, older grown, she may be hired out for special entertainment, and is occasionally retained as a permanent concubine. The *maieka*—as small postulants are called—are the most charming little creatures, in bright silk *kimonos* and floating sashes. They are taught to pose, sing, tell humorous stories, play musical instruments, until, fully equipped, they know just how to feed the vanity of the male and contribute to his sense of well-being. But, alas, their vogue is dwindling. To-day young men do not want to be danced to, they prefer themselves to dance. For this reason, and also because of the cinema, the little ladies are no longer persons of great social importance. But I do not think *geisha* will quite disappear from the landscape. They are as decorative as the chrysanthemum, and from a tourist point of view far more important. Nowadays the films absorb a certain number of them, where their training stands them in good stead. Others recruit hairdressing establishments and manicure parlours. The business of shampooing is lengthy and



involved: fashionable women seem to make a day of it!

The coiffure with many remains a monumental affair, which takes hours to accomplish. It is an occasion of reproach to possess waved or curly locks; every strand must be smooth and straight. When once an erection of puffs and loops is built up, it remains set for days, kept in place by a lavish use of shellac. The style differs with years and status; the initiated can tell a woman's position at a glance; the more modern wear their hair close to the head.

In Tokyo bobbed hair is occasionally seen, and some of the shop-assistants, typists, and work-girls are abandoning the *kimono* for the blouse and skirt. Nor can I blame them. It is not only that the national costume is utterly impracticable for city life, but it is far dearer than the modern alternative. You need a number of *kimonos*—the pattern varies with each season of the year—and, apart from the *obi* or sash, each outfit calls for so many accessories that quite a cheap costume costs in English currency about twenty-seven and six. When it is remembered that the average weekly earnings of a business girl come to less than a fourth of that amount it will be realized that it is infinitely cheaper for her to buy the material to make her office clothes after the Western model.

Fashion, though unchanging in mode, varies in material. *Kimonos* are made in sumptuous silk and cotton heavily embroidered in gold and silver or of simple design. The wedding garment for a woman is white, as a sign of mourning, which denotes that her old life is dead. Henceforth she has no lot or part in her father's household—she has been transferred to her husband.

The life of a well brought-up young lady remains in essentials very much as in the olden days. Her chief accomplishments, apart from music and social deportment, are those appertaining to flower decoration and the tea ceremony. The former is an act of many variations. Every particular flower bud or foliage must be placed at

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its inevitable angle. It is not sufficient that a vase or a bowl looks well from one side, it must present a desirable appearance all round. The result, generally speaking, justifies the pains. The delicate reticence of a single branch of cherry blossom, the suggestion in a handful of iris, achieves perfect satisfaction. Flower decoration involves many lessons, but even the most lengthy course is short compared with the initiation of the tea ceremony. I understand that the variations of this ritual are a hundredfold, covering as they do three different schools. It is a long affair, but we found it very charming. The ceremony may be conducted by a priest in a Buddhist temple—it was originally a religious form—by a *geisha* in a tea-house, or by a hostess in her home. On such an occasion the guests may be many or few, the rooms tiny or spacious, but in either case procedure is carefully observed. Every action has its precise significance, each phase its own *tempo*. At a given moment a bell usually tinkles, the guests file out into the garden, discourse upon the beauties of the scene, and return to find the tea equipage has been altered; fresh bowls of a different pattern have replaced the previous service, another brand of tea has been brewed. After such an excursion it is etiquette to praise the decoration of the room, a special print, or screen, being singled out. Each time the bell rings a change is effected. Tea beaten to a froth is served with sugary cakes, special sweetmeats appear in endless variety.

The children of Japan are decorative and docile. They will sit quiet and immobile throughout the longest journey or enjoy themselves prodigiously in a dance. Small boys and girls carry smaller ones on their backs and stagger along quite cheerily. In the country even the smallest toddler does a job of work—if it is only feeding the pigeons! Children are everywhere adored and the Japanese mother spends herself unstintingly on her family. Leisure among the working class is unknown; late to bed, they rise early, slaves of an eternal grind. In hotels and

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restaurants and at rush times in the shops they are on duty twelve to fourteen hours in the bitter cold or the blinding heat, silent and uncomplaining.

Meanwhile uplift has made its appearance and flourishes exceedingly. The Young Women's Christian Association appears, and Girl Guides, Boy Scouts, and hikers are everywhere. All these Western developments, however, merely feed the implacable egoism that is the new religion of Japan. National Christian teachers frequently embody Shintoism in their theology, maintaining that no violence is done to the creed by acknowledging that the Imperial Family is of divine origin, thus shedding reflected lustre on their people. This beatification entails not only national devotion but a national sacrifice to the fountain-head. The Japanese woman responds instinctively to the stimulus, and in spite of Western methods and discoveries her instinct for self-immolation is intensified.

Spiritless and at the same time spiritual, knowing no will but her owner's, abject in her submission yet preserving an integrity of purpose that redeems her abnegation, the woman of Japan contrives to transmute her enslavement into a tender and tragic, if intolerable renunciation!

## CHAPTER XXI

### HAIL AND FAREWELL !

JAPAN, to my mind, sees herself as a vast empire built by the sword. Her new religion in itself calls for fresh worlds of worship, the national ego is insatiable of recognition. But though she has demonstrated her superiority in war material and resources against her neighbours it is still a moot question whether she would prove so successful against a Western Power. At present her advantage lies in the fact that of all the countries in the world she is the only one not merely ready but desirous of war, for which reason she has been allowed to capture Manchuria and will be permitted to overrun North China. But even if she establishes her supremacy so far as the Yellow Sea she is not likely to call a halt.

I had a long and very interesting conversation in Tokyo with a man of many years' experience of diplomacy and an unrivalled knowledge of the Japanese.

"The trouble is," said he, "that the Japs regard themselves as having a mission to the whole of the East, and, like any man or woman who believes that, they make a nuisance of themselves to everybody else. China, of course, is only their immediate objective. They have a very real intention of becoming the ruling power in India as well. People at home still regard Russia as the danger spot. Believe me, for every single Bolshevik agent in India there are a dozen Japanese. They are at every hill-station, possibly in a small store which no one would suspect as the headquarters of Intelligence. I do not suggest Japan has fixed a date for operations in India—

she is too busy elsewhere—but that she hopes eventually to clear Europe out of the East and take her place seems to me, from all I know, certain.

“Of course, by the time she is ready to swallow India we may have cleared out ourselves; but before then, in my opinion, America will have to decide how far she means to allow Japan to threaten her sphere of influence. I fancy the next move will be in the Pacific. Japan has already built submarine bases on the islands over which the League of Nations gave her a mandate, and she has her eyes on Hong Kong, the Straits Settlements, and Malaya.

“It is a matter of common knowledge out here that Japan is intriguing with the Cantonese with the idea of establishing an air base from which operations could be launched against Hong Kong—where, by the by, only a couple of battalions of our troops at the moment are stationed. To-day both Singapore and Malaya are honeycombed with Japanese Intelligence men who know the full extent of our resources.

“Japan means business there as elsewhere, and unless she believes that we mean to fight we shall have to clear. If somebody doesn’t pull her up short she will missionize whenever and wherever she wants to.

“But first she will go for something nearer home. The original plan for her militarist development detailed three phases—the capture of Manchuria, the absorption of China, and the acquisition of the Philippines. The first two are by way of being accomplished; for the third we must wait and see. But America must realize that if she gives Japan her head too long she will find herself up against one of the most formidable fighting machines the world has ever known, with a vast foreign conscript army behind her. And the longer America waits the bigger the army will be.

“It’s curious,” he added, “how little you people at home seem to know of Japan’s real intentions. With us

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it's different. At the time that there was such a hullabaloo over building the dock at Singapore Australia insisted that if we abandoned the idea of a naval base she would approach America with a proposal for incorporation provided adequate protection was given against the Japanese menace. Australia, at any rate, is a realist where the Japs are concerned.

"I doubt, however, if Japan would be able to hold an Eastern empire indefinitely. She may fight efficiently, but she cannot govern subject peoples. Korea is always in a state of incipient revolt, and, in spite of wholesale executions of which Europe hears nothing, her new state of Manchukuo won't be easy either. Of a population of thirty millions only two hundred and fifty thousand, on their own showing, are Japanese. Five million are White Russian and the rest are Chinese who have developed the country. But whether Japan holds her conquests for ten or a hundred years she will surely succeed in downing us in the East unless we stop her."

On all sides I heard this same warning. It is my experience that the source of truth as to a country's militarist designs is inevitably the banking interest, to whom all monetary operations are known and from whom no financial intentions can be hidden. I had an illuminating proof of this from a prominent person in money circles. He told me that Japan was making preparations for war on a very large scale. This was in the summer of 1932, when the world was informed that Geneva had the Sino-Japanese situation well in hand.

"It is common knowledge that the Japanese Government have ordered thousands of sewing-machines," he said, "and credits with foreign countries have been arranged for their purchase—they'll be pouring into Japan by the shipload. Also, the mills here have been turning out khaki by the mile, ready for the uniforms the machines will make up. Huge contracts for munitions and aeroplanes have been placed abroad, and she is buy-

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ing up ships everywhere. It's not a reassuring situation for Britain—we've very heavy interests in the East and if Japan collars all the spots in the sun that she wants there won't be any room for us."

It was the same story in other quarters.

"Japan is out for gold and territory," said an Oriental scholar. "It is mere pretence for her to say that she must have room for expansion. There are vast tracts in her islands to the North totally undeveloped and uninhabited, where the climate is no more rigorous than in Manchukuo. If she were really suffering from severe overcrowding her people could migrate to the North. But this is not in the Government scheme. They want an empire and make the overcrowding in urban areas an excuse for aggression."

Even in the face of these deliberate statements I shall quite possibly be told that I am a fantastic alarmist and that Japan is merely policing China and Manchukuo for their souls' good—in other words, that her menace to the East is no more real than was Prussia's in the West before 1914. But I would suggest that however it may be regarded, her increasing acquisition of territory by terrorism is not reassuring. Moreover, it is important to remember that the national religion of Shintoism like Mohammedanism provides a spiritual urge for extended conquest with fresh adherents to the faith. The ego of Japan is a real and very terrifying force—you sense, and shiver at, its impact.

Docile, industrious, curiously malleable, the Japanese people have been mass-trained and standardized beyond belief, but behind this sheeplike obedience is a fanatical fervour which animates every action and welds a gentle people into a weapon of diabolic power for material ends.

Once you have taken Japan to your heart and metaphorically kowtowed to her you are free of her privileges and high consideration. You will be treated with a fastidious honour, but until you have done obeisance you

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are, from a national point of view, outside the pale. Among themselves Japanese traders observe a high standard of fair dealing, but towards a foreign firm commercial honesty may be abrogated without shame. To the Chinese, as I have already pointed out, honesty is bone of their ancestors' bone—the tradition cannot be broken. To the Japanese, profit to their country often comes first.

An instance of shady Japanese commercial dealing was given me in Tokyo. An American firm had ordered a large consignment of lead pencils to sample. The pencils came to hand, but subsequent complaints revealed that though there was lead at the top and lead at the bottom there was only a hole in between! An explanation was indignantly demanded. The answer came, "Work up to sample." And lo, it was even so! The specimen was leadless up its middle like the rest! One does, of course, blame the purchasing firm for not opening up the original article, but business as a whole has its own traditions and most firms expect the observance of commonplace morality.

This is but one of many cases of which I learnt. Psychology, as I have said, is not Japan's strong point and it is difficult to make her understand that there is another point of view as to the desirability of sharp practice. The argument that though extra profit be made over a dubious transaction it may shut the door on any further orders does not appeal to her. For one foreign customer lost there are hundreds of others to be exploited to the national glory and advantage.

I do not for a moment suggest that Japan's new religion of Shintoism, which sets the national ego before every other consideration, inculcates dishonest practice. But the submersion of individualism in the corporate will to supremacy throughout every department encourages all patriots to get the better of a foreign interest in politics, athletics, commerce, or war.



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A small and lovely country, gracious in artifice; a simple people with little native guile—they are in the grip of an all-devouring Moloch which demands continual oblation. . . .

Watching the people in the train from Tokyo to Nikko, most delightful of mountain resorts, with a marvellous cable car up to a Fragonard lake, it seemed impossible to believe Japan was anything but a playground for children of a larger growth. We enjoyed a perfect week-end and then, rested and refreshed, journeyed once more to Kobe, where, unexpectedly, we were held up. The cholera which had chased us all through China caught up with us here! We had expected to be aboard the *Patroclus* the night of our arrival, but the ship was in quarantine and was not allowed to leave until ten days later.

We explored the highways and the byways of the port, and visited many delicious spots and endearing places. But when at last the *Patroclus* set sail we were not sorry to leave. It is distressing to stay long in a country which in her desire to forge an irresistible weapon for world empire is palpably crushing out the best instincts of her own people.

And so we journeyed through the China Sea back to Shanghai, where we renewed old friendships, and on to Hong Kong of the British Bund. Singapore loomed again on the horizon and on a festive night we went as guests with a charming Chinese host and his wife for chow in the New World with its Eastern theatres—Chinese, Malayan, Japanese, and Javanese—and all kinds of additional entertainments.

All too swiftly we retraced our course. Penang passed like a dream; Colombo with its palms and bays and many-tongued bazaars; and with every knot we voyaged farther and farther from Young China.

Yet, over all the vast expanse of sea, the last sight, the final sound of the Flowery Land stayed in our memories.

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For as we left Shanghai the ship was followed by a crowd of lighters from whose decks resounded a fusillade of crackers which shot far and wide into the air with exuberant explosions, accompanied by Chinese acclamatory shouts. This traditional demonstration was in honour of an English couple leaving for home. But to my ears the cheerful crackle had a special significance.

“Come again, come again,” it seemed to say.

And when the last vision of the East had dipped below the horizon, the deep orange of the sun had faded once more to the thin yellow of our temperate zone, I seemed again to hear the rippling cannonade from far-off waters—at once hail and farewell!

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